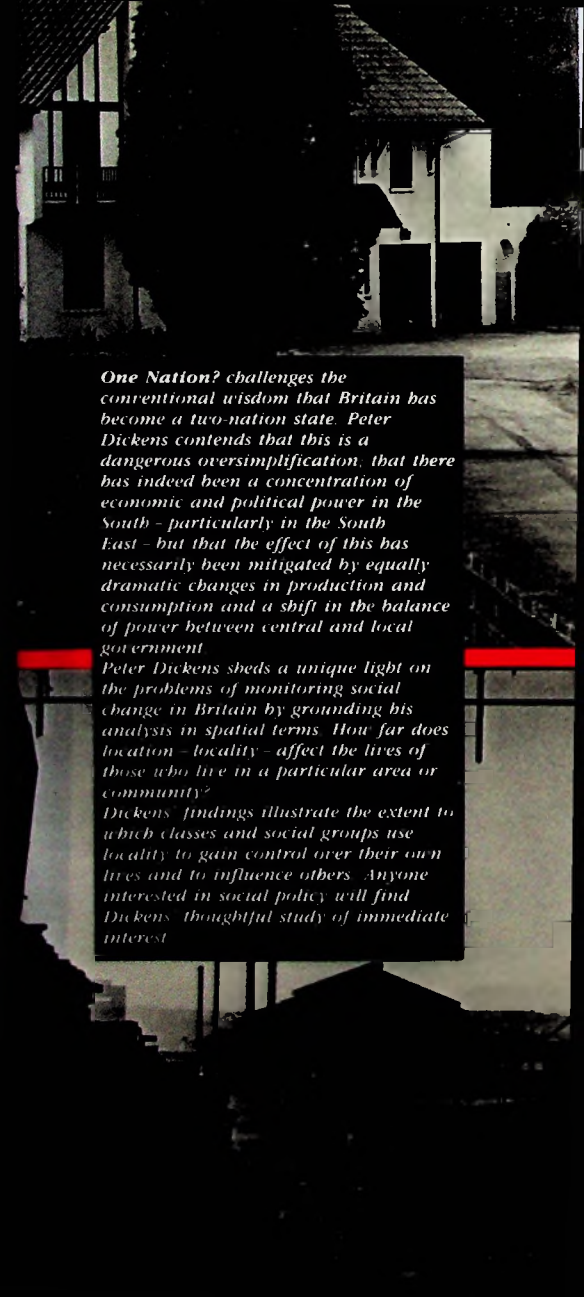


PETER DICKENS

One Nation?
*Social
Change
and
the
Politics
of
Locality*

**CLOTH
EDITION
at
PAPER
BACK
PRICE**





***One Nation?** challenges the conventional wisdom that Britain has become a two-nation state. Peter Dickens contends that this is a dangerous oversimplification, that there has indeed been a concentration of economic and political power in the South – particularly in the South East – but that the effect of this has necessarily been mitigated by equally dramatic changes in production and consumption and a shift in the balance of power between central and local government.*

Peter Dickens sheds a unique light on the problems of monitoring social change in Britain by grounding his analysis in spatial terms. How far does location – locality – affect the lives of those who live in a particular area or community?

Dickens' findings illustrate the extent to which classes and social groups use locality to gain control over their own lives and to influence others. Anyone interested in social policy will find Dickens' thoughtful study of immediate interest.

*Peter Dickens trained as an architect at Cambridge University, where he also undertook research on urban development. He is Lecturer in Urban Studies at the University of Sussex, where he is currently Chairperson of Urban Studies. He has written extensively on housing questions, most recently (with others) **HOUSING, STATES AND LOCALITIES**.*

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One Nation?

SOCIAL CHANGE AND THE
POLITICS OF LOCALITY

Peter Dickens



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ONE NATION?

Social Change and the Politics of Locality

The area is considered 'stockbroker belt'... Apart from enclaves of council housing, all these villages are considered by the inhabitants (or rather the new residents) to be middle- to upper-middle-class with a smattering of the old aristocracy plus a layer (a conspicuous one) of *nouveau riche* who seem to be in advertising, property or selling expensive bric-à-brac to the Middle East.

– Senior company executive writing from the south east of England to Mass Observation Archive.

Now for the jolly fun of watching this city's industrial base rot away, more of its people searching for work, any work, and the wretched anticipation of seeing the children come out of school with fewer educational outlets, little or no grant for further study, no jobs, nothing to do ... Not even the Raving Loony Party will lift that depression.

– Unemployed woman writing to Mass Observation Archive from northern industrial town.

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As I'll explain shortly, I was once a student of architecture. My wife Anna has stayed in architecture and, ever since the early days, has been a good friend. I'd like to dedicate this book to her.

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Introduction

Locality and the Middle Classes

What is the significance of locality in contemporary social change? Twenty years or so ago I was trained as an architect. I was encouraged to believe that the design of buildings or the physical relationships between parts of towns caused social change, and that I as a benign architect or town planner could actually create better lives for people through the physical design of buildings or towns. This was in line with the then-fashionable modern movement in architecture which placed enormous faith not only in physical design as a cause of social change but in the professionals who seemed to have clear views about how society should be organised. I was persuaded that it was possible to create a thriving social life through designing 'communities in the air' in high-rise blocks of flats. In a similar way, I could design housing estates as 'neighbourhood units' (based on shopping centres and civic centres) to create a generally better society for the residents.

Perhaps fortunately for society, I never got a serious opportunity to test these ideas out in practice. My only contribution to Britain's architectural heritage (the underground men's lavatory at Hull Paragon Station) was some way removed from either 'communities in the air' or 'neighbourhood units.' As far as I know, however, this little-known masterpiece has done little either to improve or damage Britain's (or Hull's) social fabric.

This brief account of my architectural career brings me to the first central concern of this book. What is the role of 'place' or 'locality' in contemporary social change?

I will be arguing here that it is people that cause social change and social conflict. Architects and physical space have no general or predictable social effects, even though they may be easy scapegoats for contemporary social problems. Space and design may well be very significant in affecting people's lives. For example, the protection of a space (a house, a neighbourhood or even a nation) may, as we'll be seeing later, be of the greatest importance in affecting people's perceptions, actions and politics. Similarly, architectural design may well be important in the creation of personal and social identities. We will later be meeting some instances of this in Chapter 4; for example the neo-Tudor mansions which some upper-income households occupy in Berkshire's M4 Silicon Valley.

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Nevertheless, there is very little we can say in general terms about the effect of physical space or design on social life. A 'community in the air' can indeed be a setting for a thriving set of relationships in which people act in a neighbourly way to provide mutual assistance. Such proximity can equally well, however, create neighbourly enmity. Furthermore, a 'community in the air' can be the focus of a major social upheaval. It can, for example, be a key vantage point in a riot against the police; the inhabitants (as during the 1985 Broadwater Farm uprising) throwing petrol bombs or firing shotguns at policemen beneath.

So it is people, not physical space, that create social relations and antagonisms. It is important to be clear about this, since the relationships between space and society now seem to be emerging as a major social, political and analytical issue. They have become headline news with, for example, the massive (and growing) social and political divides in Britain. Many commentators have recently been pointing to the growing social and political separation between Britain's 'North' and 'South' and between the suburbs of many cities and the inner urban areas. These divisions are real enough, but their basic causes are not always obvious and are not necessarily to be found within localities themselves. Over-concentration on purely spatial differences does less than justice to the social relations and processes involved.

There are two, closely related, themes to this book. The first is the relationships between 'the social' and 'the spatial.' We all know in very broad terms that locality is somehow bound up with social relations and social change. The more difficult question, however, is precisely *how* locality 'matters' in social, economic and political terms¹.

Emerging from this book are two complementary parts of an answer. On the one hand, locality is the context of everyday activities, face-to-face relations and the diverse range of social and political activities and alliances in which people engage. On the other hand, it is precisely through these actions and coalitions that people are exploiting and changing wider social relations such as those between classes, between genders or between owners and non-owners of domestic property. The important point is, however, that the extent to which these broader relations are changed or simply reproduced depends on the kind of social relation we are dealing with. In this respect, the three central chapters of this book (3, 4 and 5) show locality having three fairly distinct kinds of social significance.

In the case of Chapter 3 we are concerned with the relations of paid work. Here localities, or more accurately the people constituting localities, emerge as relatively passive. Capital (with senior industrial managers working on its behalf) is relatively mobile. Its main objective is

to forge profitable relationships with labour, wherever that labour may be. And in the long term capital has relatively little difficulty achieving this objective. Localities must offer flexible, cooperative, and above all productive, workforces. If they do not they tend to be ignored by capital. At the same time, areas which have not yet received substantial investment (such as previously 'rural' districts outside cities) have capital invested if there seem good prospects for forging profitable working relations in the area.

In Chapter 4, however, people's relationships within localities emerge as socially more significant. Here the concern is with 'civil society' – the range of social and collective activities outside paid work. Here too there are some relationships (such as racism or patriarchal relations between men and women) which are longstanding and extraordinarily pervasive. Those social groups and institutions which are dominant in the sphere of employment are also dominant in civil society. We will return shortly, for example, to the middle classes and their persistent attempts to use the institutions and relations of civil society to further their own ends.

Nevertheless, civil society is extremely diverse. There are considerable differences in its form if we compare households and communities. Furthermore civil society appears, at least in contrast with the sphere of employment, to be a relatively malleable area of social life. To put this another way, social life outside employment seems to offer comparatively good prospects for people to generate a degree of social transformation. Furthermore, it offers considerable scope for people to gain control over their lives and to create their own social identities.

There is an important connection here between civil society and the industrial innovations we will describe in Chapter 3. The increasingly diverse range of demands which people make as consumers is one of the main factors underlying the various forms of 'flexible specialisation' which many firms are now attempting to introduce. As we will see, a central objective for many firms is to create a set of technologies and working practices which can rapidly adapt to the changing and diverse demands made by contemporary consumers.

The combination of people's experience in civil society and in employment clearly affects the kinds of political programmes in which they engage. This brings us to Chapter 5. The realm of political strategy is perhaps of the greatest importance to our concerns since it is here that locality currently has the greatest social significance. Here some of the most basic social relations are now being contested between groups with fundamentally opposed views about how contemporary society should be organised. On the one hand, for example, some people in certain left-wing local authorities are attempting to transform the relations between capital and wage labour, the relations between black and white people or those between genders. Equally, however, we have recently been seeing

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national governments attempting to reassert the older and well-established relations and over-ride locally based strategies. The main point here, then, is that localities are being used as testbeds for alternative forms of society. The 'politics of locality' is becoming an increasingly important stake in the contests between dominant and subordinate social groups.

This brings us to the second main theme: social relations and, more specifically, the relations between the middle classes and other social groups.

One of the most startling recent social changes in Britain (and indeed many other advanced capitalist societies) has been the rapid growth of a new dominant elite; a white collar, primarily male, middle class.² While the numbers of skilled workers and unskilled working-class people have been falling rapidly in this country (by about 11 per cent and 15 per cent respectively during the last decade) the number of managers and professional workers has risen by about a quarter. Furthermore, the 'new' middle class has been steadily displacing the 'old' middle class, the latter best represented by the 'petty-bourgeois', self-employed producer. This book will be making frequent reference to 'the middle class' and, where applicable, to the 'service class.' The latter is a reasonably precise term.³ It refers specifically to the new middle class of senior administrators, managers, professionals and high-level technicians in public- and private-sector enterprises. Typically, these are people carrying out key services on behalf of the owners and controllers of the means of production. They usually have extensive qualifications and relatively high and secure incomes and prospects. Furthermore, they exercise considerable control over others at the workplace while maintaining high levels of autonomy in their own working lives. They may well enjoy quite affluent life-styles, even though they do not necessarily own substantial quantities of capital. Nor are they necessarily salaried. Indeed as I'll be arguing later, an increasing number of these people are actually self-employed, even if they remain highly dependent on work from large companies.⁴ Some of them are even leaving the service class altogether and setting up as owners of new small firms.

The reasons for the rapid recent growth of this dominant group are complex. Part of the explanation are changing labour processes and the growing divide between mental and manual work. Crucial, too, is the rapid shift in Britain and again many other advanced industrial countries) towards a range of 'service' employment. Some of the best known examples are banking, finance, advertising and property. We must be careful, however, not to assume that all forms of 'services' are booming at an equal pace. Those represented by government, for example, currently seem to be in decline, following a boom period in the 1960s and 1970s.

The 'middle classes' and 'the service class' have long been the subject of

debate amongst social scientists and political theorists. Both groups, and especially the new middle class, are key actors with major influences on contemporary societies. Yet how should we understand these influences? Much of the older forms of social analysis seem inappropriate, especially when it comes to understanding the service class. Clearly, since the people in this category are not necessarily major owners of capital, they cannot be seen as 'capitalists' in any realistic sense. However, since service class people are frequently major controllers of labour, it would be inappropriate to simply classify them as 'labour'. So how are we to understand the changing middle classes, and particularly the fast-growing and socially-dominant service class? And, still more important than categorising these people, we need to know the details of the forms of domination involved. What kinds of political and social alliances are they making with other social groups? Are they forming alliances with, for example, the substantial owners of capital, with junior white-collar workers or even with sections of the working class? Perhaps even more basically (bearing in mind our earlier comment on the divisions within this group) is it even possible to talk of the service class of senior administrators and managers as a socially and politically cohesive group?

These questions and debates form a second theme to this book.⁵ Much existing work on 'the middle class' and, more recently, on the service class has confined analysis to the workplace. But examining these groups in their spatial contexts or 'localities' allows us to start developing a better understanding of their role in contemporary society and their relationships to other, more subordinate, groups. Indeed, as we will see later, it turns out that some of the service class's principal forms of domination are in various forms of social and political life outside employment. To put this another way, it is outside employment that this group is particularly well placed to further strengthen the social power (and their resulting claim to the surplus society produces) which they have gained at the workplace. Starting with the workplace, however, it seems clear (as we will see in more detail later) that the private sector service class is not only a dominant group in terms of control over investment and the construction of new kinds of management-labour relations, but is relatively cohesive in social and political terms. From this group, for example, come some of the most active supporters of the Conservative Party. On the other hand, the 1987 election did indicate divisions within private sector management between those who received higher education and those who did not, the former being rather more likely to vote for the Labour Party. It is also clear, however, that there is an even more substantial divide between the private sector service class and those who work for the public sector. The public sector service class are more inclined, for example, to support the Labour Party with its higher

public welfare priorities. All this suggests that seen in relation to their workplaces, the service class as a whole has rather little social and political coherence.

If we start examining these groups in their spatial contexts, however, we can start getting a better understanding both of their diversity and their growing influence. I conclude in Chapter 5 that there is an important sense in which the 'local versus national' issue is not about localities at all. It is more about how different sections of the influential middle classes use the issue to create coalitions and to protect their material interests. Spreading across both the public- and private- sector service class are some common concerns. Perhaps the most important of these are the benefits stemming from owner occupation and house-price inflation. We will later see senior members of this group protecting neighbourhoods and house prices and, towards this end, making alliances with other groups (such as skilled working class people or the 'old' middle class) who also stand to benefit in these ways. The danger is, of course, that in all the rhetoric about 'local versus national', those who do not have material interests similar to those of the middle classes will find themselves further marginalised.

The picture is not, however, straightforward. Middle class domination is diverse; oscillating in apparently unpredictable ways between various forms of 'left' and 'right' politics. One of the most important factors here is not only a person's work or housing tenure, but *where* someone works and lives. For example, a service class member benefiting from 20 per cent house price inflation in South East England is in a substantially different material position to a similar individual stuck outside the South East by high house prices. Indeed, such 'sticking', even if it is a deliberate strategy by the households involved, may have considerable implications for an individual's and a family's well-being.

The benefits of locating the service class in their spatial contexts become particularly clear if we want to understand the likely conflicts and coalitions between the service class and other social groups. There are two key tensions underlying Chapter 5. First, there is that between, on the one hand, the resistance of subordinate groups to various forms of middle class domination and, on the other hand, the tendency for such groups to move towards the politics of the service class if there are large numbers of the service class in the same constituency. The mechanisms underlying this political domination are complex, but they are partly connected with the economic success, or otherwise, of the locality in question. It is the shared progress of the locality (its job opportunities, its house prices, its education and welfare provision) which is the common feature here. Locality-based alliances are, it seems, very much a result of diverse groups of people sharing common material interests in the areas where they live and work. We will elaborate on this later, suggesting that as service-class geographical mobility declines, these cross-class alliances around locality

are growing in importance. The general point here, however, is that by examining the service class in its spatial contexts we can begin to answer some important questions about the effects of this dominant group on contemporary social and political change.

The second tension is that between, on the one hand, the politics and strategies stemming from specifically local social relations and processes and, on the other hand, the strategies developed by central governments for British society as a whole. There is an underlying contradiction here for which there are certainly no easy 'solutions'. Nevertheless, an alternative is to place much greater emphasis on locally-developed strategies; remaining nevertheless wary of service class influence.

Discussion of the service class brings me to the likely readership of this book. The intention has always been that it should be read by anyone with an interest in localities and social change. Ironically, however, it is most likely to be read by the middle classes to which the book constantly refers. What the book says about them (and particularly the service class) will not, however, be wholly to their liking. This could be particularly the case when it comes to outlining interventions and strategies in Chapter 6. Here I explore some of the implications of earlier chapters, arguing in favour of what Raymond Williams calls 'maximum self-management'. This would take a number of forms but it essentially entails the assertion of greater levels of control, whether at the workplace or in community life. It also entails the active development of local diversity, rather than imposed 'One-Nationism' or top-down measures imposed by national governments. Nevertheless, learning lessons from some of the strategies of local authorities, this chapter does not suggest wholesale dispersal of national government power. Central governments too have a role to play within the project of 'maximum self management'.

One reason why a service class readership may find this chapter unappealing is that it proposes some substantial transformations to their social positions. The underlying concern is with changes which will bring more extensive levels of self-management to 'marginal' groups such as the unemployed, the homeless, the skilled working class and women. To this end the chapter proposes forms of industrial restructuring and changes in community relations which could weaken the private-sector service class and its potential for influencing other people's lives. Furthermore, and perhaps more uncomfortably for the Left, it proposes that public sector spending should be increasingly directed towards improved services for those in need, rather than towards the employment of more highly-paid (and well-organised) local and central government senior administrators.

Strategies of 'maximum self-management' therefore entail recognising not only the service class's overarching influence, but the varying (even

contradictory) nature of this influence. Many writers on the service class see these people exercising a necessarily conservative influence on society. They have, it is argued, too much vested interest in the status quo for them to countenance radical change.⁶ This, however, makes too many assumptions about the politics and cohesiveness of this middle-class group. As we will see later, for example, a number of the leading members of the so-called 'new urban left' are members of the service class. Like other social groups, the service class has increasingly shared material interests in the localities in which they happen to live. This shared interest can, however, represent either a reactionary influence or a force for radical change.

Notes

1. My definition of 'locality' here is dependent on a number of sources. As regards locality as the context of everyday, face-to-face experience, I have been influenced by the work of Anthony Giddens. See, for example, his discussion of 'locale' in Chapter 3 of *The Constitution of Society* (Oxford: Polity, 1984). As regards locality as the context for people's politics see M. Savage, *The Dynamics of Working Class Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1987). And as regards the broader social significance of locality I have particularly benefitted from S. Duncan, 'What Is Locality?' University of Sussex Working Paper in Urban and Regional Studies No.51.

2. It is of considerable importance that the service class is an overwhelmingly male preserve. Nevertheless, it is a fact which seem to have eluded almost all academic theorists. In 1981 in Britain only 19 per cent of managers in large establishments and 23 per cent in small establishments were women. Just 11 per cent of professional employees are female. Presumably an explanation would refer to the various forms of patriarchal exclusion operated by this highly professionalised, male (and white) social group. For a discussion see S. Walby, *Patriarchy at Work* (Oxford: Polity, 1986).

3. The concept of 'the service class' was first used in the early 1950s by Karl Renner. For a partial translation of his work see 'The Service Class' in T. Bottomore and P. Goode (eds), *Austro Marxism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1978). The concept was later used and popularised by R. Dahrendorf in *Class and Class Conflict in an Industrial Society* (London: Routledge, 1959). For a recent discussion of the service class and its different forms in different societies see S. Lash, J. Urry, *The End of Organised Capitalism* (Cambridge: Polity, 1987). For Marxist commentators perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the service class is the fact that while its members are not wage labourers producing commodities for sale (they are principally engaged in the *distribution* of goods) they nevertheless gain a substantial

proportion of the total social product.

4. My definition of the 'service class' here is based on J. Goldthorpe *Social Mobility and Class Structure in Modern Britain*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980), p. 40.

5. For a full discussion of the problem of the 'middle class' (and further discussion of the 'service' class) see see N. Abercrombie, J. Urry, *Capital, Labour and the Middle Classes* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1983).

6. This is the argument put forward by both Renner and Goldthorpe. Goldthorpe argues this particularly strongly in his paper 'On the service class, its formation and its future' in A. Giddens, G. MacKenzie (eds), *Social Class and the Division of Labour* (Cambridge University Press, 1982).

Uneven Development

This book is about the politics of locality and the objective of the first two chapters is to outline what this means. On the one hand capitalism is unevenly developed. That is to say, the relationships between different classes and groups take quite different forms in different places. Furthermore, the forms these take change over time. On the other hand, capitalism and the relations which constitute it are not pre-given. They are made by people. These people have their own understandings and accounts of society. They have their own ideas about what is important, the personal and social relations they form, what is being done to them, and what they can do about it. The meanings which people have about society are translated into action and that action can change that society itself. So uneven development is a product not just of broad social processes or what powerful individuals and social groups (such as those in multinational companies or those in governments) do, but also of the way we all act as individuals or groups.

It is this collision between on the one hand the deep structural relationships in society (between classes, between genders, between owners and non-owners of property, between governments and people) and the way in which people consciously or unconsciously make or change these relationships which constitute what I am calling 'the politics of locality'. Small-scale localities are for most of us the settings of our everyday lives and therefore the scale at which we both reproduce and change these broad relationships. The scale of the places is not, however, the most important point here. For some people the home, and its intimate personal relations may be the most significant setting in which society is both reproduced and changed. For some it could be the scale of the neighbourhood or the town. For some people such as managers in large companies the scale of their regular experience, and of their views about how society is organised and might be changed, could extend throughout the country or even throughout the whole world. The importance of what I rather loosely call the 'urban' scale has, however, a special importance for most of us. For the majority of people, the urban scale has a special importance in terms of everyday life. This is the scale which includes home, paid work, school and other routine actions such as shopping. It is the scale which encompasses many people's direct experience. This is not

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to deny, however, that for many people (many women and unemployed people or elderly people, for example) this may not be the scale of greatest significance to their lives. For many of these people the home may be the scale at which they regularly encounter and deal with the institutions affecting daily life.

So this book, and these first two chapters, has two main parallel and interlocking themes. On the one hand, the social relations of capitalism and the uneven development of these relations over space and time. On the other hand, people's actions; actions using and constrained by these broader relationships and processes. These actions usually take place within limited spatial settings and are necessarily based on their interpretations of how the social world is organised. These actions are, in turn, and intentionally or otherwise, both reproducing and changing these broader processes. Furthermore, they spill over into people's politics and their attempts through the political system to change what is happening to them.

It should be clear from this that I do not want to separate out the uneven development of capitalism from people's everyday actions, interpretations and struggles. The two are tightly interlocked. Nevertheless, I intend to make this separation for ease of exposition. First I want to indicate the new geographical forms which Britain's capitalism is taking and some of the broader processes underlying these forms. Then, in the following chapter, I will use three people's accounts of their everyday lives to illustrate what I mean by peoples' experience of locality in contemporary Britain.

Uneven Development and Paid Work

What does 'uneven development' mean in practice? The idea that Britain is increasingly 'two nations' is a popular one and one that is the very stuff of media comment. Yet it has a material reality and has a particular force when applied to the realm of paid work. Unemployment rates in parts of Northern Ireland and the North East, for example, are well over double those in the South East. A 'national average' of 13 per cent unemployment means precious little to anyone anywhere. Furthermore, these divisions seem to be increasing. Table 1.1 shows changing levels of unemployment in different regions. It shows how, following a period of convergence, the gap between the Northern and Southern regions is now similar to that of the early 1930s. In some respects the picture is even worse than then, with the West Midlands (Britain's erstwhile industrial heartland) now joining 'the North' as a peripheral region.

Table 1.1 Percentage Unemployed by Region 1931-84

Region	1931	1951	1961	1971	1981	1984
South East	7.8	1.1	2.2	4.1	7.1	9.3
East Anglia	9.4	1.9	2.5	4.4	8.3	9.8
South West	8.1	1.8	2.4	4.4	9.2	10.8
South	8.4	1.6	2.4	4.6	8.2	9.9
Yorks & H/side	12.2	1.6	2.6	5.2	11.2	14.1
North West	16.2	2.2	3.5	6.1	12.5	15.1
North	19.2	3.0	3.8	6.9	14.2	18.0
North I	15.9	2.3	3.3	6.1	12.9	15.7
Wales	16.5	3.5	4.2	6.9	13.2	15.7
Scotland	16.1	3.3	4.5	7.4	12.1	14.9
E & W Midlands	10.9	1.3	2.1	4.5	10.9	13.5
North II (a)	15.2	2.5	3.5	6.2	12.3	15.2
UK	12.0(GB)	1.9	3.0	5.2	10.2	12.8

(a) Total non-South

Source: Census Figures, Dept of Employment, compiled by P. Cooke, 'Britain's New Spatial Paradigm: Technology, Locality and Society in Transition' (Paper given to ISA XI World Congress of Sociology, New Delhi, August 1986). Available from P. Cooke, Dept of Town Planning, UWIST, Cardiff.

The restructuring of the British economy is having very uneven social effects. The great growth in so-called 'producer services' (transport, communications, distribution, insurance, banking, finance and business services) is, for example, remarkably concentrated in the South. One recent study shows that 64 per cent of towns experiencing growth of 2,000 or more people in this kind of employment between 1971 and 1981 were in the 'South' (the South East, South West and East Anglia).¹ Another recent study of Britain's most booming towns ('booming' in the sense of high growth rates, high levels of household affluence and low levels of unemployment) confirms that towns with high levels of services employment, and comparatively high levels of affluence, again tend to be located in the South. Indeed, the top 15 of Britain's booming towns are all located in the Home Counties.

Furthermore, many of these boom areas are distinguished by large concentrations of 'service-class' residents. Winchester is perhaps the best example of how the new kinds of services employment can combine with the rapidly-growing service class to produce a spectacular concentration of

affluence. Four-fifths of Winchester's employment is in services and its service class of upper level managers and employees is around half as much again as the national average. By contrast, the fifteen areas with the lowest scores of 'success' are overwhelmingly located in regions outside the South. Central Scotland, North East England, Merseyside and South Wales are the main areas not sharing in the mid-1980s growth in Britain's economy.²

Furthermore, these trends towards a South-biased services economy look set to continue. A recent survey of employers' plans suggests that between 1985 and 1990 a further 650,000 jobs in manufacturing will be lost. Meanwhile, this will have been partly offset by 500,000 new jobs in the private services sector. The main growth here will be in business services (215,000 jobs), catering (120,000) and wholesale distribution (70,000). These new jobs will be in the South East, the South West and East Anglia.³

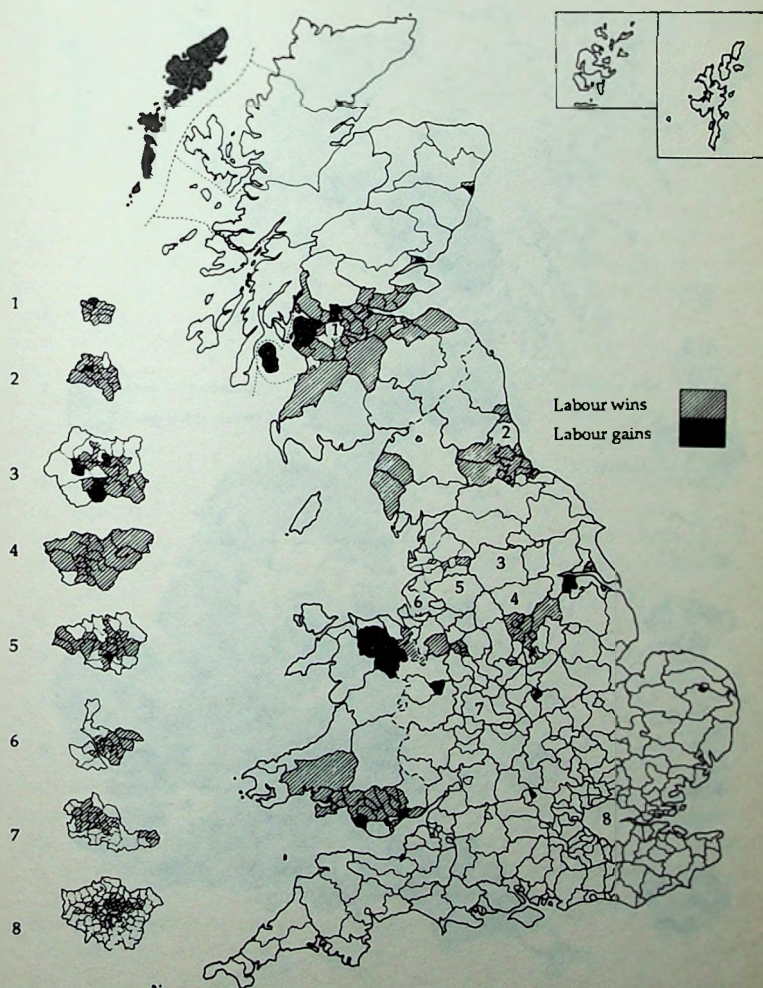
However, regional statistics and predictions of this kind can be misleading. While in the South service sector jobs may be making up for the loss of manufacturing in purely numerical terms, the fact is that the new jobs in services are not necessarily available to those people (especially the male workers) who previously had full-time work. Many of the new jobs are low-paid, part-time and largely intended for women. Similarly, if we are interested in unemployment as it affects individuals (as distinct from *net* job-gains and losses) this has increased at a higher rate in the South East (215 per cent) since 1979 than in the North (144 per cent). Furthermore, there are of course enormous variations within the supposedly 'affluent' South. London, for example, has an unemployment rate of approximately 10.5 per cent (with much higher levels in some of the inner boroughs) whilst some of the outer areas such as Winchester or Crawley have levels of around 4 per cent.⁴

Politics, Paid Work and Uneven Development

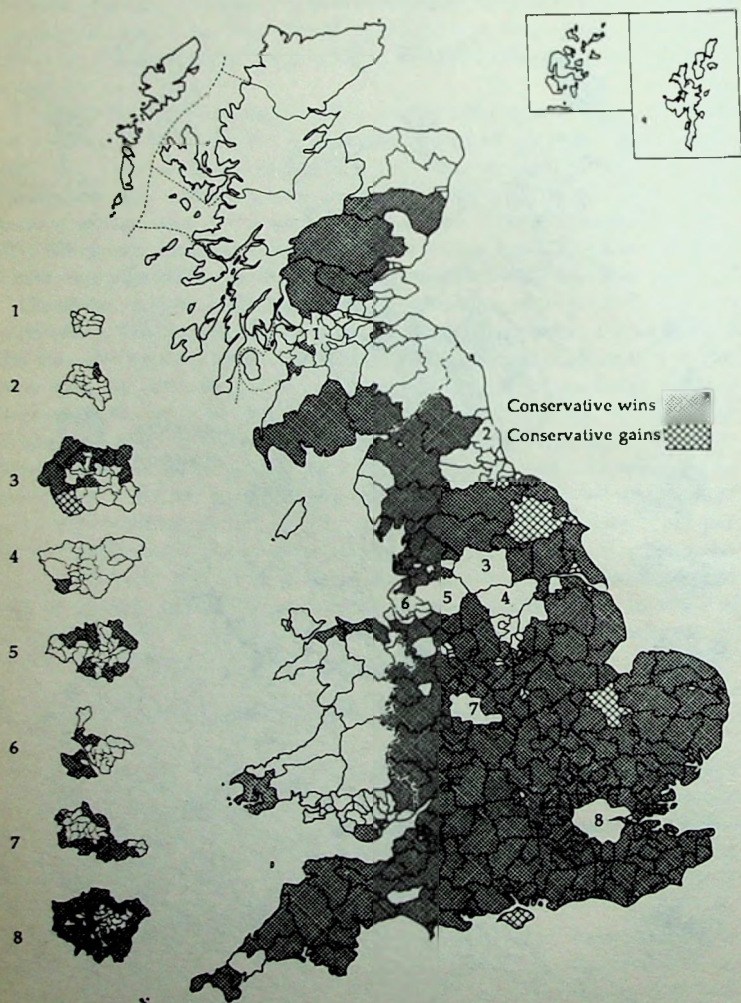
These social polarisations are increasingly reflected in the uneven development of Britain's politics. Maps 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 are based on the results of the 1987 general election. One way of summarising what's happened (and remembering that Northern Ireland's political parties bear no relation to those on the mainland) is that the Conservative Party now rules over only one of the four British kingdoms.

Map 1.1 shows that Labour's support continues to have two main geographical bases; both of them in areas of relative economic decline. The traditional Labour regions (especially Wales, the North East and central/southern Scotland) have remained Labour. Indeed, these heartlands (especially parts of southern Scotland) strengthened their position in 1987, mainly at the expense of the Conservatives. Labour has strengthened its position in the old industrial manufacturing towns such as

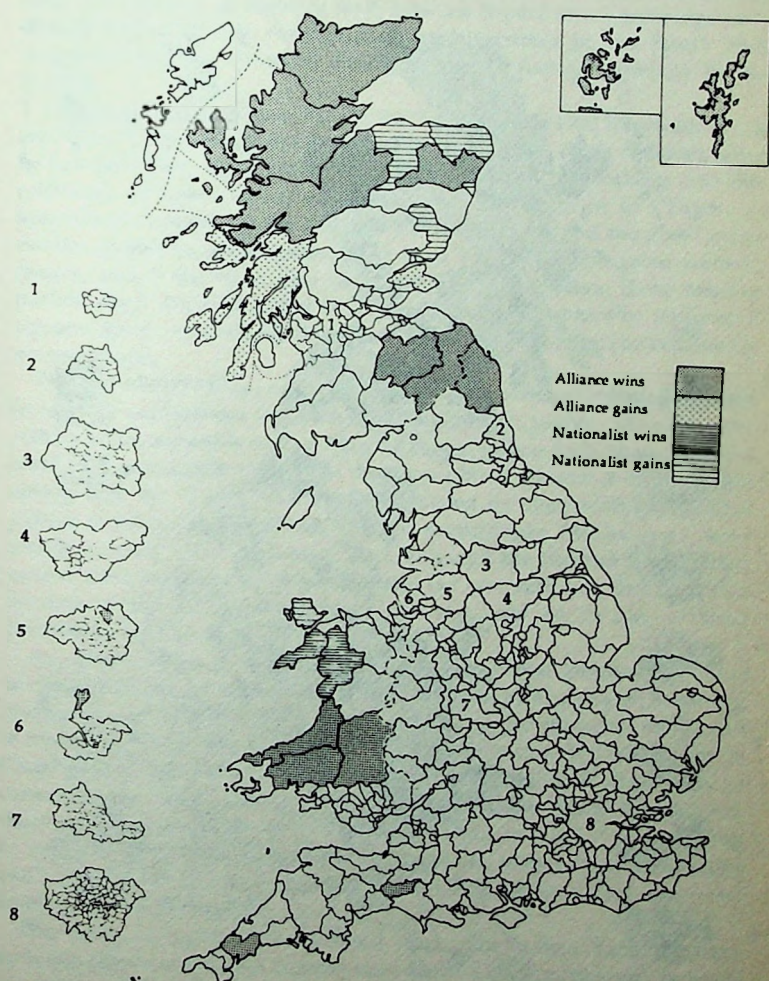
Map 1.1 1987 General Election . Labour Wins and Gains



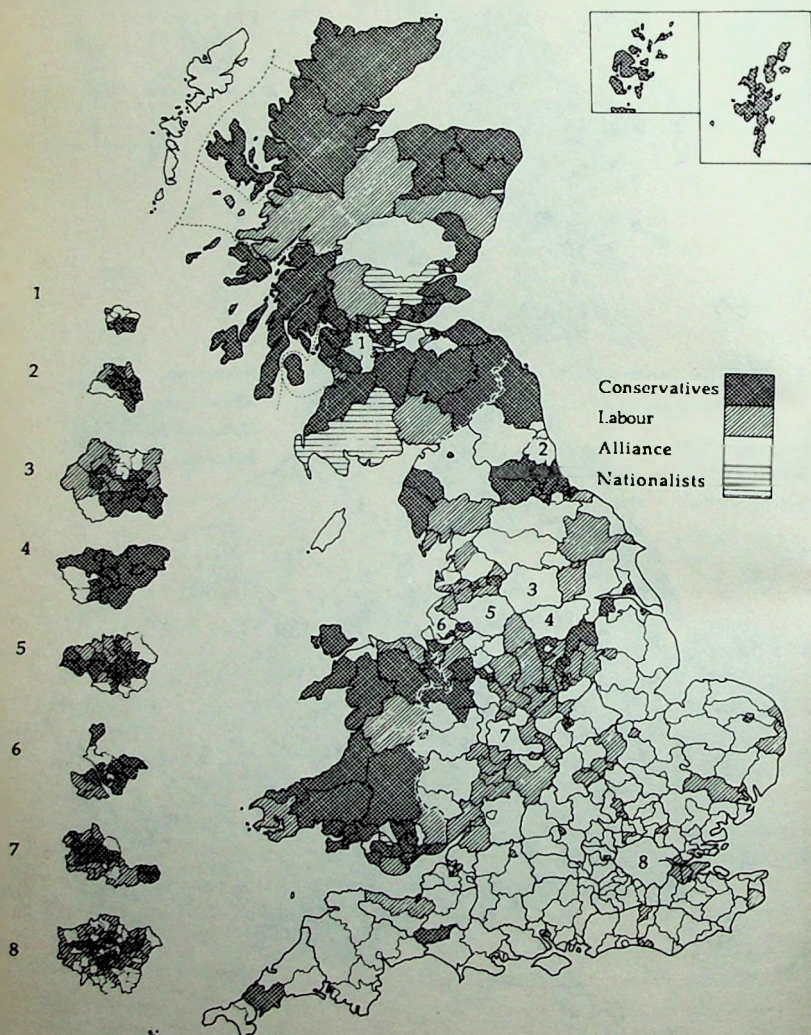
Map 1.2 1987 General Election. Conservative Wins and Gains



Map 1.3 1987 General Election. Alliance and Nationalist Wins and Gains



Map 1.4 1987 General Election. Runners up



Bradford, Glasgow, Leicester, Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield. As Map 1.2 shows, however, the Tories' 43 per cent of the total vote strengthened their hold in England and, in particular, the relatively affluent south eastern region shown on Map 1.5; the area Doreen Massey calls 'the crescent of high-tec land between Bristol and Cambridge'. (Of course the relatively concentrated constituencies in the South East underestimate the extent to which the Conservatives dominate in the South.)

Labour gained only two seats in the South East in 1987 (Norwich South and Oxford East) while the Tories made eight gains, three of which were in London. They therefore still have the problem of breaking into this relatively affluent region; a problem we will return to in Chapter 6. Meanwhile support for the Alliance parties slumped and remained quite evenly spread over the country. As Map 1.4 (those who came second) shows, under the 'first past the post' electoral system, these smaller parties seem doomed either to representing geographically peripheral regions (parts of Scotland, Wales and south west England) or repeatedly coming second.

The Conservatives appear, then, to be ruling a series of colonial outposts from their power-base in South-East England. In reality, of course, the picture is not so simple as this. Map 1.4 shows, for example, the continuing *depth* of Conservative support in these peripheral regions. It is also worth noting that the Tories have not been ousted by specifically nationalist parties in Wales and Scotland. Perhaps surprisingly, Plaid Cymru came second in only one Welsh seat. And, although the Scottish Nationalists gained three seats in north east Scotland (an area suffering from the local decline of the oil industry) they did not hold on to any of their previously-held seats.

As these maps show, there is indeed a broad political division corresponding to Britain's wealthy and poorer areas; the picture becoming increasingly polarised. On the other hand, such a picture is too simple and is insufficiently detailed about specific constituencies. We will return in Chapter 5 to the complexities surrounding the political alignments of constituencies. But, staying for the moment at this rather broad level, there is one critical post-war development to bear in mind if we are trying to understand why the Conservative Party has achieved such authority and why the Labour Party has found it so difficult to attract equivalent levels of electoral support.

This is the changing nature of paid work. Jobs in manufacturing have dramatically declined over recent years; about a third of the population in the early 1960s down to about a quarter now. On the other hand, there's been a rapid increase in higher status 'white-collar' work. As we have seen, however, the 'white-collar' group contains a mixed array of quite different kinds of people. Some of them are clerical workers, managers or

professional people still linked to manufacturing industry. Some of them form part of the rapidly booming 'services' sector, in particular those involved in the world of finance based on the City of London. A large number are a result of the boom in public sector employment which took place in the 1960s and 1970s. Perhaps most important is the upper-level white-collar service class. As we will see later, they exercise a strong influence not only on forms of local politics, but patterns of community life and house prices.

As Table 1.2 shows, the trend away from a manufacturing base and towards a white-collar 'services' economy looks set to continue. This table also shows that we can expect the 'service class' to continue growing.

Table 1.2 Employment change 1984-90

Sector	Proportion of total employment (%)		
	1984	1990	Net change
Primary industries	3.8	3.3	-0.5
Manufacturing	23.6	21.3	-2.3
Construction & utilities	7.7	7.7	
Transport, communication & distribution	20.7	20.6	-0.1
Professional & miscellaneous services	22.6	25.8	+3.2
Social services & public administration	21.6	21.4	-0.2

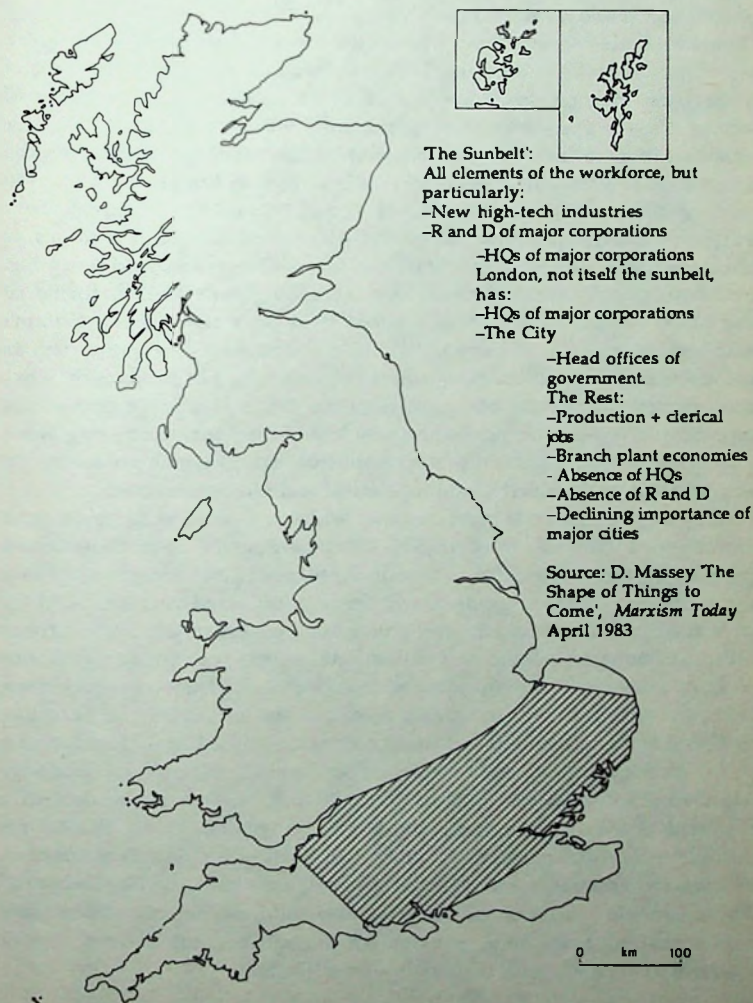
Source: General, Municipal and Boilermakers Union document quoted by P. Bassett in 'Life beyond future shock', *Financial Times*, 3 August 1986.

One of the biggest changes to the workforce has been in the increased participation of women in paid work. This will emerge later in this book as a change with major social and political implications. The total number of women entering paid work has risen to about nine million since the 1960s, though it now appears to be declining. On the other hand, the trend towards women increasing as a proportion of the workforce does seem to be continuing; from about 30 per cent in the early 1960s to over 45 per cent now. What kinds of jobs women actually get is, of course, another matter. The 'feminisation' of low-paid, unskilled, part-time work has proceeded much more quickly than that of higher-skilled and higher-status work.

New Spatial Divisions of Labour

At the core of these changes are those connected to the ownership and control of companies in Britain. To an increasing extent Britain's economy is dominated by a relatively small number of exceptionally large conglomerates. More multinationals have developed from a British base

Map 1.5 The Shape of Things to Come



than from any other country apart from the US. It is predominantly these very large companies which have detached their head offices from their sites of manufacturing and located their higher-level control functions in the South East. In Britain's south-east corner, therefore, is a formidable concentration of financial (as well as governmental) control over the rest of Britain's social and economic life.

Doreen Massey's map (Map 1.5) shows vividly the new way in which the country is being carved up. This map needs assessing in the light of employment changes since the late 1970s. In most areas the number of 'service class' upper-level managerial and white-collar jobs has been expanded. But an increasing differentiation has taken place between the higher level of management (in the public as well as the private sector) in what Massey calls 'that swathe of tamed rurality'; the great Tory heartland which stretches between Bristol, Southampton and up to Cambridge and 'The Rest' of Britain.⁵ While higher-grade paid work has been increasingly concentrated, the increasingly de-skilled forms of production work have been decentralised. To a large extent it was Britain's peripheral areas (the suburbs of the old cities as well as regions such as the North East and North West) where the new forms of production work were located during the boom years of the 1960s and 1970s. Especially important here was the predominantly low-skilled manufacturing work often done by women. It is also the peripheral regions which are seeing the concentration of the lower grades of clerical and managerial work.

But it is also the 'peripheral' regions which are more vulnerable. And here we need to amend the map. The 1980s have seen a de-feminisation of many industrial and service sectors in these peripheral areas; partly as a result of routine lower-grade work being supplanted and replaced by automated production and the computerisation of service jobs and partly as a result of outright closure as multinational parent companies attempt to cut costs under increasingly competitive conditions. These two processes, combined with the continuing decline of the old industries (for example, coal, steel and engineering) and the maintenance of the City of London as a centre of the world's money markets lie behind Britain's increasingly polarised 'Two Nations'. One of the problems has been the lack of a powerful business class in many of the peripheral areas. Wales, for example, never did have large numbers of local industrialists resident in the area. Other areas, such as the North East, once contained an industrial elite (controlling, for example, mining and shipbuilding companies), but they have not been able to establish enterprises sufficiently big or powerful to compete with the new multinationals.

All these general and nationally-based processes are combining with existing local societies to form quite new kinds of local social diversity. The geographical mobility of capital, the increasing national and

international concentration of control over local economies, the decrease in old-style managers and company-owners running small-scale companies, the growth of state employment, the increase in the number of people unemployed and semi-employed are all producing quite new kinds of local society.

John Urry suggests that there are now, as a result of broader changes in British society four new kinds of local society in contemporary Britain. He differentiates these localities by the nature of the dominant employer, the intermediate classes and the working class. He defines women within the working class as a particularly significant factor, though he ignores racial divisions.⁶

1. large national or multinationals as dominant employers – smallish intermediate classes – large working class, either male or female, depending on supposed skill level.
2. state as dominant employer – large intermediate classes – declining working class – high employment of women.
3. traditional small capitals as dominant employers – large petty bourgeois sector – largish male working class – lowish female employment.
4. private service sector capitals as dominant employers – largish intermediate classes with high female component – smallish working class.

It is worth noting, however, that this definition of localities is entirely in terms of the paid work in the area. I would want to define localities in additional ways, particularly in terms of the 'civil societies' of particular areas. Later I shall be showing how other kinds of social divisions (housing tenure, for example) combine with local employment to affect people's life-chances and politics substantially.

Social diversity between regions (more specifically, the increasing differences in male, non-manual earnings between the South East and East Anglia on the one hand and 'the rest' on the other) is one emerging feature of contemporary Britain.⁷ It is a feature which lies, as I shall be arguing in Chapter 5, behind the shift in Britain's political landscape. On the other hand, there are some other processes at work creating similarities between places. In terms of employment, perhaps chief of these is the search by capital for new forms of labour, especially labour which is relatively cheap and ill-organised. So while regions may be getting more differentiated in terms of their economic functions they are becoming more homogeneous in at least one important aspect: the use of relatively cheap manual labour. Closely linked to this, of course, is the use of relatively cheap *female* labour.⁸

There is, however, one important thing to remember about these social

and spatial divisions in contemporary Britain. This is the crucial interdependence of Britain's 'Two Nations'. Seen in the context of other advanced industrial nations, Britain is itself becoming peripheral. A 1985 report from the EEC, for example, showed that every UK region except the South East performed worse than the EEC in terms of output. The South East, the South West and East Anglia all had higher than the average EEC level.⁹ One of the central reasons for the relative decline of Britain's economy is the growing division between Britain's financial institutions (again centred largely in the City and the South East of Britain, but increasingly engaged in moving money and investments on an international scale) and its manufacturing base. So the state of the latter is closely related to the activities of the former. To an uncomfortable extent, then, we are actually all one nation.

Towards Increasing Privatism?

So far we have discussed social processes in broad terms. But how do all these changes in the spheres of paid work and politics relate to the practices and politics of individuals and households?

A popular contemporary argument is that 'civil society' (that whole realm of social life outside paid work and not part of the state) is now forming an increasing part of people's identity and consciousness. The increasing concentration of management and politics and the fact that many people are losing influence over their work lives is leading, so it is suggested, to a new kind of more privatised society where people's consciousness, actions and politics are centred less on the workplace or on collective community life but on the individual family and the dwelling. The home, it is argued, is of special significance here. The growth of owner-occupation allowing households to profitably invest a great deal of time and money in their own home, is seen as a large part of this process. But the attraction of the home and of individualised consumption is not just monetary. It is also an area of life offering self-determination and choice in a society determined by interests and processes (such as the investment-patterns of internationally based companies) over which individuals have little influence or direct understanding. As some recent proponents of this argument put it: 'in so far as people have any sense of control over their own destinies this is more likely to be experienced in the private than in the public domain.'¹⁰

This book will, however, be arguing against such a simple view of how individuals and households react to, and form part of, social change. The 'privatised consumption' argument separates off the realms of consumption and the home from the whole of people's lives, including their lives in paid work. This inevitably has a debilitating effect on our understanding of contemporary change since it is above all the variable and complex

combinations of peoples' actual lives in paid work and civil society which will affect their actions and politics.

A salutary corrective to the 'privatised lifestyle' argument is the example of the South Wales miners. Here is a group of people which, since the mid-nineteenth century, has placed great value on home ownership and various forms of self-help. Yet here is one of the principal centres of the labour movement in Britain. The blanket notion of 'privatised lifestyles' can do little justice to an example such as this or to the many other complex combinations and variations in people's experience. Whether and how much households' lives are 'privatised' is therefore a matter for investigation in actual situations, rather than prior generalised assertion. So a central reason for seeing people and groups in their spatial contexts is to understand these combinations, their uneven development over space and their implications for people's outlooks and struggles.

These arguments and these combinations of circumstances affecting people's everyday lives will be a central theme throughout this book. On the one hand, the lives actual people lead in actual places are clearly deeply affected by broader social, economic and political processes and relationships. On the other hand, we cannot simply 'read off' these ways of life from these broader processes. We also need to know how people act and react, what is important to them in their particular circumstances and how people in different social circumstances use the structures of economic and political power to organise their own lives and perhaps fight back. We should then better understand how these social and political structures are themselves reproduced and changed. To do this we need to listen to people.

Notes

1. A. Townsend 'The Location of Employment Growth after 1978: the Surprising Significance of Dispersed Centres', *Environment and Planning A*, no.18 (1986).
2. A. Champion et al., *Changing Places* (London: Arnold, 1987).
3. A. Rajan, *Services - the Second Industrial Revolution?* University of Sussex Institute of Manpower Studies Report. (London: Butterworths, 1987). Further information: *Financial Times*, 5 February 1987.
4. *Department of Employment Gazette*, January 1987, reported in *Guardian*, 8 January 1987. See also *New Society*, 9 January 1987.
5. D. Massey, 'The Shape of Things to Come', *Marxism Today*, April 1983.
6. J. Urry 'De-industrialisation, Classes and Politics' in R. King (ed.), *Capital and Politics* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983).
7. Figures collected from the New Earnings Survey by M. Savage (University of Sussex mimeo) show a convergence of regional wage differentials amongst manual workers, but a divergence amongst

non-manual workers.

8. On increasing similarity of localities in terms of female employment, see A. Warde 'The Homogenization of Space? Trends in the Spatial Division of Labour in Twentieth Century Britain', in H. Newby et al (eds), *Restructuring Capital* (London: Macmillan, 1985). Warde also suggests that regional wage levels for manual workers during the twentieth century have converged; a result, he argues, of trades unions becoming increasingly organised at a national level.

9. Commission of the European Communities, *The Regions of Europe* (Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1984.)

10. G. Marshall et al., 'Class, citizenship, and distributional conflict in modern Britain', *The British Journal of Sociology*, vol. XXXVI, no.2 (1985).

Three People and the Politics of Locality

Recently I have been 'listening' to some people who have contributed to the Mass Observation Archive, based at the University of Sussex. For over six years the Archive has been asking people in many regions throughout Britain to record their views and reactions to a wide range of subjects, including the state of the British economy, house prices, neighbourhood and family life, cuts in public spending and the changing political scene. From the large number of people who have contributed I've initially selected three here to illustrate what I mean by 'the politics of locality'.¹

Initially I want to concentrate on two of these people. One is the Director of Finance in a large investment corporation. The other has had a series of very senior management jobs, the last with a multinational industrial company again based in London. Both of them live in the swathe of tamed rurality, the finance director in a small hamlet in what he calls 'the deep country' and the industrial manager in a small but expanding town to the west of London. The Mass Observation Archive gave both these people an 'A' social class category, signifying exceptionally high income and status. They are both senior service-class people. In broad terms, therefore, they are comparable though, as I hope to show, there are important differences between them and their politics which we can explain.

A number of general and national processes are, potentially at least, affecting the lives of these two people, and indeed of the other people we will meeting later. Some of these processes we've already briefly discussed. They include a rapidly changing economy having disastrous impacts in some of the old industrial regions but causing boom and growth in other areas such as parts of the South East and the M4 corridor. House prices are, in terms of a national average, rising. On the other hand they appear to be rising at a much faster rate in the South East than elsewhere and, as we'll see, in some declining areas they are actually falling. Finally, when these people were writing, a radical Tory government was initiating an attempt to solve Britain's economic problems through, amongst other measures, a strong drive against trade unions and cuts in public spending.

Coming through very strongly in the observations of these two

service-class members is a clear set of views about Britain as a whole and what is wrong with it. For these views they are dependent on a nationally-based media. However, unlike most people, they are able to supplement this picture with their own experience of managing key sectors of the British economy. They make regular overseas journeys as part of their work and this gives them a strategic position in assessing the nature of Britain's economic, social and political problems.

On the other hand, they are also closely attuned to how their own locality is working and how, as a result, their and their families' day-to-day lives are (or are not) being affected. They are well aware, for example, of how much their houses are worth and what's happening about jobs or the state of public services. On the basis of their perceptions and their experiences they are thinking about (possibly re-thinking) their political alignments, considering their options and attempting to change what's happening. Part of this attempt to change things is through the formal political system, either in voting or using the institutions of the state to gain relative advantage.

They show two things. First, they indicate that social change, or 'uneven development', even though it is generated by processes and relationships which are far-removed from most individuals' everyday lives and influence, is also not some pre-ordained thing enveloping and totally constraining everyone's thoughts and actions. People are caught up in and constrained by social relations; those of, for example, class and property ownership. At the same time, these relations are made up of people and they can be weakened or strengthened by people's actions and politics. They also indicate the extent to which the social orders which are dominant in relation to paid work also attempt to maintain their dominance when it comes to community life and politics. To illustrate what I have in mind here let us look in more detail at our two especially influential people in the swathe of tamed rurality.

The Service Class and the Black Hole of the Economy

The Finance Director working in the City and living in 'the deep country' has distinct opinions on the problems of the British economy and possible solutions. His strategic and panoramic view of British society is reflected in his distinctive opinions on how Britain's market economy should be revived back to health. The Thatcher Government's diagnoses and cures closely reflected the opinions of this City financier:

As we have recently seen, our gross national product will depend, to a certain extent, on the world economy. Again, job prospects will depend to an extent on political decisions as to the ratio of wealth-producing jobs (for example, industrial and commercial) to non-wealth producing jobs (for example, civil service and medical).

He is a supporter of the Thatcher government and its strategies for restoring the British economy. The defeat of the miners was for him a key episode in restoring Britain's social values and economic progress:

I assumed from the start that the government could not afford to lose this and I am relieved that they did not fudge the issue. The defeat of Scargill was essential because of the unacceptable things he stood for: uneconomic coal production, undemocratic union management and mob violence. The NUM defeat will later be seen to have marked a turning point in the militant trade unionism that made post-World War 2 Britain uncompetitive.

Meanwhile, back in another part of the rural swathe, our industrial manager is far less certain that the economy is being managed in the right way. Though he is also a Conservative he is distinctly unhappy:

I think the forecast of better things to come has flown completely out of the window. The basis for our economic well-being – the private sector – is now in a complete mess and with the US economy unlikely to pick up in the foreseeable future there is not so much as a fleeting glimpse of a glimmer at the end of the tunnel. The general impression here is that the world is being sucked into an economic black hole.

However, as regards the impact of economic collapse on the particular regions in which they live and work, there is little immediate concern. In this respect at least the two men are as one. There are, for example, no real signs of economic depression in the City of London or in the financier's deep country. The town where he lives appears to be a long way off from being sucked into the black hole. At all events, unemployment does not affect his social circle.

As regards unemployment in this area it seems to be mainly affecting the school leaver – especially those leaving the comprehensives. The job centre does not seem to be any more crowded than a few years ago... In the circle of acquaintances I have it is unusual to be aware that anything as traumatic as redundancy has happened until the family departs either overseas or to another district of the UK. The situation is regarded as so unusual (still!) as to be almost indecent and the subsequent feeling of guilt is decorously camouflaged.

Whatever their differences on the running of the economy at large (and possible implications for these people's political allegiances) both these senior businessmen have few complaints about the effects of government strategies on the employment-prospects represented in their localities. In

this respect, therefore, they have little reason to change their political alignments fundamentally.

House Prices, Civic Tone and the Service Class

The two senior managers also have little to complain of when it comes to their own domestic property. Like most people who became owner-occupiers in the 1960s and 1970s (including working-class home owners in the same region) they are seeing their investments grow in a satisfactory way; even if low-income people trying to purchase a house in the same area may not share the service class's enthusiasm for house price inflation. The City financier, for example, lives in:

a five-bedroomed house, with 10.5 acres of land, occupying a rural position with superb view, on a privately-maintained lane. The property has various outbuildings including a stable. I bought the property in the autumn of 1971. It was offered at £27,500, but there was a steep rise in property prices then occurring and I had to pay £1,000 more than the asking price – although the word had not been invented, in fact I 'gazumped' another would-be purchaser. I recently thought of moving, and two estate agents looked at the property. One advised that it would sell today for about £150-160,000, and the other thought it would get £10,000 more. The house has only been improved slightly by us. One change is that bedroom number six was converted into a second bathroom.

Similarly, the senior industrial manager (whose area has good rail and road connections to London) has little reason to complain about the impact of government policies on the value of his house. Prospects for house prices also look promising:

We moved here in 1968/9 and paid £13,500 for the bungalow, four bed, two bath, combined living room and dining room, two garages, central heating, greenhouse and one acre garden. We added a 10 ft by 20 ft dining room extension in 1974 and changed from oil to gas. We put the house on the market in Spring 1981 and had a firm offer of £88,000, the asking price being £95,000... Given a favourable budget house prices will start to rise and in 12 months will be 15 per cent higher.

There is, however, more at issue here than house-prices. Both men are also closely monitoring the civic tone of their neighbourhood and especially any incursions which could spoil the atmosphere. Of particular concern to the industrialist, for example, is the recent arrival of new and brash recruits to the service class. They represent, in his words:

a layer (a conspicuous one) of *nouveau riche* who seem to be in advertising, property or selling expensive bric-à-brac to the Middle East. They advertise their financial status by sporting new Range Rovers (despite gardens of less than estate size) as well as Jaguars, solid gold bathtaps (so rumour has it), heated swimming pools with extendable overhead covering and lily ponds with ornamental fountains. (No gnomes in evidence but one or two concrete Venuses!) Finally, one of the villages sports a main Ferrari dealer.

Protection of the neighbourhood and of house prices are also watchwords for the City financier. For him and for the manager, 'community' in the form of close relationships to friends and relatives is extensive, but it tends to be conducted outside the immediate vicinity. Local level 'community' on the other hand, seems to largely revolve around fending off the economic demands of the nearest neighbours. As the City financier writes:

For the last 14 years I have lived in the country. There are only about a dozen other houses within a half mile radius of me and the nearest house is about 400 yards from mine. I would have expected a closer community spirit than ever in this location but in fact there is very little. This is because the interests of the residents are different and often in opposition. Thus a chicken farmer, a dairy farmer, a retired executive and a City commuter (to name my four nearest neighbours) all have quite different and often conflicting interests. The chicken farmer would like to erect more buildings, but no-one wants that. The dairy farmer has large trucks visiting him which others feel unduly damages the road surface, and so on.

So in varying ways these upper-level service-class people are actively protecting their localities, their house prices and their quite comfortable ways of life. Furthermore, such actions may well benefit some less well-off people (especially home owners) in the same area. Another set of potential alliances is around local levels of public-sector provision.

Welfare and Public Spending

When it comes to public spending we find these two people with more to test their political allegiances. Furthermore, it's at this stage that we can begin to see potential overlaps between these people's concerns and those of low-income groups living and working in the same area. On the subject of the NHS and financial cuts the Director of Finance writes 'I have myself been unaffected', and 'I have no great experience of the NHS.' He has not been seriously ill and, besides, one of the perks of his senior position is a BUPA subscription which allows him to use the private sector health service. On the other hand he still regrets the decline of public sector

health care. A close relative of his has been badly affected by insufficient specialised provision and the Director writes that 'a number of my friends have criticised the long delays they have suffered.' The senior industrial manager also writes of a decline in public services in his area. For him personally, 'the effects of local government cuts have been negligible.' On the other hand, 'most people use the health service, despite the fact that an increasingly large minority are in a private health scheme and use it in tandem with the NHS.' He will continue to support public sector provision, even though he is much less dependent on it than the surrounding population. Furthermore, this senior businessman makes special mention of 'continuing and increasing complaints regarding education from those who have elected to send their children to state schools' and growing worries about the effects of cuts in domestic rates:

Indirectly of course the government's reduction in the rate support grant has caused the escalation of local rates, which not long ago one regarded as having a minimal effect upon one's cost of living but which is now a major factor in whether or not one can afford to live in a high cost area.

But more immediately important to this manager than cuts in central government health spending, cuts in education spending or even cuts in the rate support grant are cut-backs to the region's rail services. The Serpell Report, proposing reductions in British Rail's network, had recently been published. Furthermore, it had triggered off a series of rail strikes aimed at stopping the cuts. All this, combined with government-imposed restrictions on British Rail's spending, made rail travel a topic of much concern in the stockbroker belt: 'The complaints in this predominantly middle class area revolve around BR, which apart from recent strikes are concerned with dirty, crowded and unpunctual services. These seem to grow exponentially with the increase in fares.'

Politics and Locality

So both these key service class people are well attuned to the fortunes of their areas (especially house prices and the state of public services) and are taking active measures to protect their ways of life and their economic interests. And some of these measures will benefit others in less fortunate positions.

At the same time, these people are (through the media and their own experience) gaining a picture of how the nation as a whole is performing and the impact of national government strategies both on the performance of the British economy and on their own localities. And, although the interests and politics of these two central people have much in common, they are actually experiencing quite different effects of national policies.

These differences are in turn having distinctive effects on their politics. The City financier's instinct is to vote Conservative and he can see no reason for changing that now: 'I should record that I myself will vote Conservative at the next election and have done so in each election since I was old enough to vote.' On the other hand, the political loyalties of the senior industrial manager are now under strain. He remains concerned about the decline of public sector welfare provision. At the national level he is also very worried about the state of the British economy relative to other advanced economies. The Serpell report is just one instance of how a fundamentally bad piece of policy has further disastrous effects in terms of encouraging organised labour. Weighing up his options for the 1983 General Election he writes:

I shall plump for the lesser of two evils as I have done in the past – or perhaps it should be the least of three evils – the Conservative Party. By instinct I am an old-fashioned liberal, but I regard the Labour Party as fragmented, dominated by dogma and fear of the union bosses. I consider their catchpenny ideas of wholesale nationalisation, heavy borrowing and the so-called social contract together with the annual economic assessment (whatever that may mean) as a load of unmitigated rubbish which would prove even more disastrous than the present state of the French economy under Mitterand... The Liberal Party seems to have lost its identity, having contracted an incestuous union with that set of carpet-baggers the SDP! This leads me to the only alternative – Tina Thatcher – at least she is pretty steadfast, although I detest her school marm voice and condescending manner... The Serpell Report is a good example of a cock-eyed directive leading to the overwhelming victory of yet another left winger to the leadership of a key union.

Perhaps most important of all, he is profoundly unhappy with what he sees as a polarising and disintegrating political picture; one being exacerbated by a deliberately divisive national government. Most significantly from our viewpoint, he is looking for (or harking back to) a form of national, common-sense, consensus politics. This would be one in which all social groups started to share roughly the same political values; values which were preferably close to his own. This concern over the lack of consensus comes through in his description of the diverse array of politicians, none of which he feels particularly attracted to:

On the Conservative side barristers, those who have made it in business, publishers, those born with the silver spoon in their mouths, ex-services and, exceptionally, a very few technologists. On the other side trade unionists, lecturers in red brick universities, technical colleges and colleges of education. Social scientists in the main and that's about it!

More particularly, he is concerned with the apparently-increasing popularity of the new breed of Left politicians, especially those achieving support at the local level. This is because of national government's 'stubborn refusal to compromise':

Because of the lack of understanding of the psychology of the situation things seem to be going wrong; we even have the unedifying spectacle of the Lords defeating a government Bill and Ken Livingstone being a hero and defender of democracy... If the government does not sort itself out despite its large majority, we are in danger of being saddled with an ultra left wing government in a few years time.

We have so far been looking at two similar high income people and the making of their politics. I now want to turn to a comparable process as it is undergone by a low income, socially more 'marginal', person. But, in turning to this third person, we can also see a difference. Whilst the two affluent people we've just heard from are certainly very sensitive to the circumstances of their locality they also have strong views concerning the politics of the nation as a whole, how it is organised and what strategies are best for it. As I have argued, these views stem, at least partly, from their own work experience; the fact, for example, that their companies are competing with overseas firms. Closely linked to their strategic positions in management is a broad assumption that their priorities are (or at least should be) those of the nation as a whole.

The combination of a 'local' view with a wider national view is also a feature of households in 'lower' social classes. Understandably, however, there tend to be fewer assumptions here about working class priorities prevailing for the nation as a whole.

A 'Marginal' Person

The person I have chosen to contrast with the two high-income service class people is a woman living in a northern town with a declining industrial economy. She is therefore part of Britain's 'other nation' in a geographical sense, although she could just as well be living in a declining industrial area in, say, the Midlands or London. She did have a good job, but she has given it up to look after a sick relative. She has a husband who is employed in a large British-owned industrial firm, a firm whose future is also a source of concern. They live in an owner-occupied house. Here, in this Northern town, the declining manufacturing economy of Britain clearly means far more. As the woman puts it:

The industrial news here is truly awful. One firm made 350 redundant and closed down an entire factory in the district. It used to make

loudspeakers for Hi-Fi equipment but lost all its markets to the Japanese. A second firm closed down a large site and about 1000 people lost their jobs. On Friday there was the loss of a third firm. 500 lost their jobs. Of course, there is a knock-on effect on local clubs, pubs and shops and people cancel their subs to magazines.

The collapse of the town's economy (and in particular its effects on young people) is her main concern:

Now for the jolly fun of watching this city's industrial base rot away, more of its people searching for work – any work – and the wretched anticipation of seeing the children come out of school with fewer education outlets, little or no grant for further study, no jobs, nothing to do.

The town's desperate economic situation is leading her to put forward her own solutions. They are often of a self-help kind; a long way from the broad and strategic remedies proposed by the City businessman and the industrialist.

Sometimes I look at all the derelict or semi-derelict land around here and wonder if it couldn't be worked once more as farm land, and for local lads to once more keep cows or sheep or pigs... The limpest slogan, the most weary and pessimistic thing I hear is: 'There are going to be no jobs soon. We must educate people to Make Use Of Their Leisure.' If I were a political leader, I'd ban this hopeless saying. What we must say is: There Are 101 Things a Boy Can Do. What about saying: Back To The Land From Where All Wealth Must Flow.

Like the two businessmen, this woman has an active interest in her other main source of well-being: the home. She is well aware of property values, mainly a result of regularly reading estate agents' advertisements in the local paper. She also monitors house prices by talking to people, finding out about their housing careers, the reasons for price changes and what they have done to keep up the values of their properties. While the businessman in the swathe is putting up with the unwelcome incursions of the *nouveau riche* this woman and her neighbours see the growth of Pakistani owner-occupation as a bad development, one spelling a collapse in house prices. She sees incoming Pakistani families, not so much the local economy's collapse, as causing the decline in house prices.

It would be idle to deny that Pakistanis do affect the inhabitants of our area. I have heard many neighbours say 'I think the place has definitely gone down recently' and pull mouths when they see another

house up for sale. 'Who's going to come? Will it be another Pakistani lot? Who's got the house where the policeman used to live?' 'It's a girl who used to live at the end of the road. She's married to an Arab. Well at least he's not a Pakistani, but he looks like one. A pity he isn't a rich Arab.'

On the other hand, she meets many Pakistanis regularly and admires the way in which some of them are actively using the housing market to counter the effects of the recession:

I had a conversation today with a Pakistani immigrant... The house he lives in now is, I would say, worth about £4,500 on the open market. He is going to sell this and purchase a shop. This shop and business was on the market for £12,500 a year ago. He has bought it for £9,000 and is congratulating himself on his bargain. He has applied for an improvement grant. I am deeply impressed by his energy and knowledge of how the system works. There is a little discreet gloating that house prices here are very cheap now 'because of the unemployment', he says.

Despite the fact that she 'admires' the Pakistani immigrant, this woman and her neighbours are of course raising the potentially explosive issue of racism. The town she's reporting from has long been a centre for Asian immigrants. In the 1950s and 1960s they were attracted here and were crucial for the success of the local economy. Now, however, as the economy has declined and as this decline is reflected in falling house prices, black people are being held responsible. This kind of scapegoating and the attempted exclusion of black people from 'white' areas is a common feature of British society. A number of studies in different areas have shown that white people in inner urban areas attribute declining house prices to the presence of black people.² In some instances (though not in the case of this northern industrial town) this has led to active support for the fascist National Front. We will return to this extreme version of the politics of locality later.

Community Life

The woman in this northern town is living in a closely-packed social setting which, as we saw at the end of the last chapter, has been declared long-dead by some sociologists. Her associations are largely with people in similar circumstances as herself, her daily routine being closely locked into her neighbourhood of friends and neighbours. 'Community' for her is quite unlike that of, for example, the comparatively 'privatised', property-centred finance director in the South-East. However, as often happens, a rich and localised community life can be oppressive. We can make few cosy assumptions here about a cosy, supportive, local network of

friends and neighbours.

Neighbours. We live in a fairly well-defined neighbourhood, bounded by a bus-stop on top of a hill, an avenue at the top of the hill and open fields below us. So we form the 'block.' I'd call anyone living on the block a neighbour – about 45 houses, so about 200 adults and children. I recognise quite a few of them and grin and nod. Some talk at length and some are complete unknowns. I suspect most of the 200 recognise me: curiosity is intense and scandal-mongering a favourite activity. Wife-swapping and other irregular unions are taken in the neighbourhood's stride. Folk twitch their curtains and watch with unashamed interest everybody else's doings. If I were ever to take a lover, I suspect most details about him would be known within 24 hours.

Welfare and Public Spending

Not surprisingly, the effects of government spending cuts are felt much more here than in the southern swathe. The deteriorating bus service is particularly resented by this woman who does not have access to a car and is regularly responsible for the children:

I would say the effect of the cuts in local government spending has been quite marked in this area. Schools are starved of funds for books; there are fewer buses. This last consequence can be a real curse for housewives and shoppers. We used to be able to get a bus within about ten minutes' wait: now you're lucky if one comes after 15 or 20 minutes, or appears at all. Fares are shockingly high; taking two children to town costs 30p for an adult and 15p each for the children. £1.20 for fares there and back.

Perhaps surprisingly, the health service continues to get high praise:

The one bright spot remains the health service. It has served us well. It is not just on our account; this town used to have one of the most appalling health records in Europe, so perhaps a little extra effort was put into our clinics. For whatever reason, I am grateful. My younger son would have died without care from our hospital and frequent visits mean we are connoisseurs of standards there.

Politics and Locality

These experiences, combined with a national picture, again form the basis of this person's politics. This woman's vote at the 1983 general election was going to the party which seemed to offer the most in terms of solving the town's unemployment problems.

I voted Labour in the last general election, but am unsure whether I shall vote the same way again. Our current MP is one of the decent getting-on-a-bit Labour war-horses who may well get the push from his own party workers or be superseded by Militant, or find his position menaced by an eager SDP candidate. I think I shall try to attend their meetings and see how they shape up before I cast my vote. The problem that weighs with us most is the unemployment that throws so many well-qualified people on the dole and the lack of work that means so many school leavers have nothing to look forward to in this city... I shall probably end up voting Labour, but am open to the sense and cogency of any useful-looking SDP candidate. I might even vote Militant Tendency.

Such are the circumstances and the kinds of reasoning which lead to Britain becoming two nations politically as well as socially and economically. We will return to such reasoning later, looking at how some other peripheral people's politics are affected by their positions in households and civil society. We will also be looking more systematically at a process which we have just begun to touch on here; the politics of the more dominant service classes profoundly affecting the circumstances and the politics of constituencies as a whole. In other words, the local social and political influence of these groups is quite disproportionate to their actual numbers. We've already begun to see this with, for example, the protection of house-price inflation by our manager and financier. Through protecting their own economic interests they are beginning to influence the house prices and living standards of those who are not in such good positions.

Before coming to this issue, however, we need to get more precise about the processes involved in the construction of dominant and subordinate groups in an advanced industrial society such as Britain. What lies behind the decline in numbers of the industrial working class? In addition to the divisions between managers and workers, what are the processes leading to divisions between the subordinate classes? What are the impacts of recent industrial changes on localities? And how do the combinations of these impacts with other forms of social change affect the actions and politics of different groups? To answer this we need to look in depth at the processes now taking place within the industrial economy.

Notes

1. Full details of the Mass Observation Archive available from Dorothy Sheridan, the Library, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton.
2. See, for example, C. Husbands, *Racial Exclusionism and the City: The Urban Support of the National Front* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1983).

Locality and Industrial Relations: Towards a Flexible Britain?

This chapter is about the relationship between locality and paid work. Senior service class managers clearly have the central role here as regards investment-decisions and the management of labour forces. They will therefore regularly appear in this chapter. However, an unemployed 57 year-old manual worker can introduce some of the key themes.

This Mass Observer lives in the docklands area of London's East End. He is, in his own words, one of the 'Inner-City Have-Nots' compared with what he calls 'The Surrey-Suburban Haves'. For 30 years he was a manual worker with a multinational company based in the area. Many of his neighbours were dockers who, in his words 'were another breed altogether, the elite of our area and the most militant'. For him and the dockers, 'Our lives were allied to work and nothing else in our one class area.' Now, both he, the dockers and many other people in the area are redundant. In his case, he has continued applying for jobs, but always without success. We can begin to understand why he doesn't get employed when we hear how he got on with his managers when he was at work with the multinational. He enjoyed the job but 'Being a rebel, I couldn't stand the treatment one could get from a bullying foreman one minute, then wanting to drink a pint with you at lunchtime. Utter hypocrisy. Lack of feeling for working people on the lower scale.' He looks back to a time of solidarity between working people in the area. As he puts it: 'I know it can never be, but I would love working people to identify with each other more.'

In place of this solidarity, he has seen the rise of 'the sycophantic middle class who seem to ape everything that to my mind is self-centred and communally destructive'. As a result 'we [the working class] are mere fodder for the elitist management.' One of the main reasons for this he argues, is people owning their own home. As a result, collective actions and demands have given way to private interests.

I am also annoyed with working peoples' politics which are assessed by their status. The bricklayers and others who were buying their own house all refused to strike in 1971, thinking selfishly, so I have come to the conclusion that if M. Thatcher had everybody mortgaged up to the hilt for a mere *roof over their head* she would have us grovelling even further into the mire. How I hate that word 'property'!

His advice to young unemployed people is not to bother with status and 'status clothes'. Instead, they should travel abroad. 'See how different it is on the continent away from the English class structure.' Furthermore, he'd like to see education changed with sociology as the main subject and a new subject introduced in every school called 'Enlightenment, But Not Under a Capitalist System'.

The basic point for him (and, it seems, for many of his immediate neighbours such as the ex-dockers) is that industrial capital (and, with it, the industrial managers) has left. The very militancy of the area in earlier periods has been an important factor in managers' decisions as to how and *where* to invest capital. It may now be returning to provide, say, office work in London's docklands for a new breed of worker in finance houses expanding from the City or for journalists in Rupert Murdoch's Wapping newspaper plant. Managers, on behalf of capital, are looking for 'green' labour; labour which is not simply cheap, but which is inexperienced and not fixed in its ways. It is distinctly not returning for workers and ex-workers such as men who talk about 'class' and the 'capitalist system'. As we'll see, much the same applies to other labour-movement heartlands such South Wales and the West Midlands. Capital may well return, but only if it can forge the right kind of working relationships with people and technology to provide high productivity and profitability.

Employment and Locality

Relationships between managers and wage-labour are of course a core element in any capitalist society. But the particular forms these take vary considerably over space. Furthermore, they vary over time. In many sectors attempts are now being made by management to reform substantially the working relationships which have long been established in Britain and many other advanced industrial societies. For example, attempts are being made to introduce new kinds of management practices to humanise work, making it less boring and soul destroying. They are also attempting to encourage workers to identify with the company's objectives and to work flexibly within the firm; such flexibility being rewarded with, for example, special benefits (of the kind received by finance director) or life-time job guarantees. All this is a far cry from the workforce of the past. Other workers, in fact a rapidly growing number, are left outside the firm; part-timers or temporary workers called in as and when they are needed.

However, these new kinds of relationships and practices are not being, and cannot be, simply imposed 'from above'. Firstly, they are often being introduced to countries and regions which have well-established management-labour practices. Senior managers have to find ways of

combining investment and new working methods with existing practices and relationships or, quite possibly, avoiding altogether those people who threaten to undermine productivity and profitability.

Secondly, relationships (old or new) between managers and workers take place in the broader context of other kinds of relationships, especially those of civil society. In the factory or the workplace a worker may be just that – a worker. But outside the factory she or he has a number of other roles (mother, father, home-owner, neighbour and so on) all of which may well be central in forming someone's identity, consciousness, priorities and politics.

Two more people will be considered in the next chapter on civil society. They are in part-time employment. I call them 'peripheral people' because they are peripheral both to the new forms of management-labour relations now being slowly introduced to this country and to the older practices which still predominate. I have chosen these particular people since they illustrate what seems to be a well-established trend in Britain: the growth of part-time, predominantly female, employment. The present chapter tries to explain why this is taking place. It is concerned with employment, its location, the creation of divisions between permanent or 'core' workers and 'peripheral' workers and the reasons for recent changes in these divisions. In the next chapter we will be concerned with social changes outside employment. There I'll be taking the two women in part-time employment to illustrate the point that, although they may be in rather similar situations in the sphere of paid work, their well-being also crucially depends on the *context* of these work based relationships. This context in turn affects their politics.

Uneven Development and Production: Towards a New International Division of Labour?

US corporations call their international production facilities 'offshore sourcing'. To unions these are 'runaway shops' that take jobs away from American workers. Economists, meanwhile, talk about 'a new international division of labour', in which low-skilled, labour-intensive jobs are shifted to the 'newly industrialising' Third World countries. Control over management and technology, however, remains at company headquarters in 'First World' countries like the US and Japan.

A. Fuentes, B. Ehrenreich, *Women in the Global Factory*

Some people think that jobs are going to the Third World and will never come back to Britain. The argument is that since the 1960s an increasingly multinationally-based capital has been shifting its production activities to countries with cheap, docile, often female, labour.

A number of factors, it is argued, lie behind this process. First, there has

been the growth of a massive reserve army of cheap labour, created by 'the green revolution', the large-scale industrialisation of agriculture and the surge of large numbers of people from the countryside and into the cities. They, the argument goes, are prepared to work intensively, at low wages and in poor conditions. A second process is change in the organisation of work itself, in particular the fragmentation of industrial work into a large number of relatively discrete and elementary units of labour needing only de-skilled or semi-skilled labour. Such fragmentation and de-skilling is seen as an important way in which labour costs have been reduced. Third, new forms of transport and communication have been developed, meaning that industry as a whole is not tied to particular places and can simply use the locality offering the forms of labour and resources most appropriate for increasing profitability. As George Ball (senior managing director of an international investment company) put it in 1967:

Today a large and rapidly expanding roster of companies is engaged in taking the raw materials produced in one group of countries, transforming these into manufactured goods with the labour and plant facilities of another group, and selling the products in still a third group. And, with the benefit of instant communications, quick transport, computers and modern managerial techniques, they are redeploying resources and altering patterns of production and distribution in response to changes in price and availability of labour and materials.¹

If the pull of cheap labour was one of the principal reasons for shifting manufacturing to Third World countries, it is also argued that there was a severe 'push' involved; namely the squeeze on profits in the advanced capitalist countries during the 1950s and 1960s. The demands made by an increasingly confident labour force in the OECD countries meant that capital had, in the immortal words of the *New York Times*, to 'Automate, Emigrate or Evaporate.'

Over the past four or five years, however, it has become increasingly clear that the concept of 'The New International Division of Labour' (NIDL) is fraught with a number of connected difficulties. First, it is not at all clear that it is historically accurate, or at least that it exists in the simplified form in which it has been expounded. Second, the analysis underlying it – and in particular its enormous emphasis on cheap labour as the basis for the location of manufacturing industry – now appears increasingly inadequate. IBM, for example, was one of the first to adopt a global factory strategy. But the strategy was aimed not at using cheap labour countries, but locating production near to markets. And third, a number of recent developments in the social and technical organisation of industry indicate that the alternatives of automating, emigrating or

evaporating do not exhaust the full range of managerial alternatives. These reservations about NIDL are important, not least because of their implications for the possible re-industrialisation of the advanced industrial countries and, linked to this, the consequent effects for the Third World.

As regards historical accuracy, it seems we may well have been over-impressed by what senior management in some companies in some sectors of the economy have been up to. We will be discussing car production and micro-electronics in more detail shortly, but note here the problems of NIDL in relation to the notion of 'the world car' and the production of silicon chips. Until the early 1980s there was much discussion of the world car; essentially the same mass-produced and mass-consumed product produced and assembled in a very wide range of countries. A Ford made in Halewood for example, being the same as one made in Saarlouis, West Germany and an Escort made in whichever plant drawing on component supplies on a global scale. Fords produced in Michigan had axles constructed in Japan, shock absorbers from Spain, rear brake assemblies from Brazil, steering gears from Britain...and so on. And, though coined by Ford, the 'world car' concept was also under active development by other multinationals such as General Motors and Volkswagen.

This dramatic concept has not, however, worked out very well in practice. The complexity of motor vehicles and the vast scale of operations involved have proved daunting even for transnational corporations. As a recent survey of the car industry has put it:

Producing a single item in moderate volume in a Less Developed Country for its domestic market is one matter; making millions of units of a complex product in a Less Developed Country for shipment halfway around the world to a sophisticated OECD market is another.²

The fact is, then, that managers of multinational car companies have not been able to operationalise the world car on the originally intended scale. Furthermore, the advantages of sourcing components from low wage areas in Third World countries have indeed deteriorated as factories in the OECD countries have been increasingly automated. And this raises the important general prospect of 'relocation back to the north', the concept of the re-industrialisation of the old industrial economies now being raised by a number of authors. These include, for example, Rada's study of the microelectronics industry: 'The increase in automation lessens the importance of direct labour costs in total production costs, thus making the manufacture of formerly labour-intensive goods economically feasible in developed countries.'³

A degree of historical inaccuracy also seems to pervade our

understanding of how the chip-production multinationals use localities. The Fairchild Camera and Instrument Company is well-known for establishing an export production plant in Hong Kong as early as 1961. Wages there stood at about 28 cents an hour. And, as we've seen, IBM (the world's largest producer of integrated circuits) adopted a superficially similar 'global production' strategy, but for reasons other than those of using cheap labour.

What seems to have happened here is that a NIDL argument has been constructed on the basis of a limited understanding of what managers of *some* firms, in *some* sectors have done at *some* times. Furthermore, the argument gives an exaggerated emphasis to one particular factor affecting the location of production – cheap labour. But now it is clear that labour costs are but one item affecting management strategies. These strategies are affected by many other items (such as equipment, research and development and energy costs) which are becoming increasingly important as a percentage of the total costs of production. Furthermore, there may well be just as pressing issues outside the cost of production (such as access to markets necessitating production inside tariff barriers) which will affect the multinationalisation of production. Besides, even if cheap labour were the main cost criterion, this can take the form of cheap labour in people's homes or cheap immigrant labour within the industrialised world.

There is, in short, little to make either the Third World or the First World in *themselves* the preferred location of production. The key issue, and it's the issue which links the whole question of production methods to that of locality, is how labour, capital and equipment are combined to gain maximum productivity and competitive advantage and how, as part of this fundamental underlying process, the advantages of different localities are perceived.

It is this point which leads us back to the more fundamental issue of how industrial processes and the social relations of paid work are now being reorganised by the leading companies in the advanced industrial societies. Since the late 1970s and early 1980s there has been an increasing interest by the North American and West European service class in the sources of Japanese success. How has the Japanese economy been made increasingly successful whilst other advanced industrial countries have been flagging? How have they gained large increases in productivity without, it seems, the use of especially sophisticated machinery? How have they managed to adapt so rapidly to changing patterns of demand? And, perhaps most importantly, how have they tackled the 'labour problem'; a problem identified, but not solved, by Henry Ford.

So senior managers of Western companies, or at least those working for the more dynamic companies, are attempting to learn lessons from the Japanese organisation of production. And these lessons have much to teach

labour as well as capital. The innovations are largely social: concerned, that is, both with the creation of new management-labour relations and with the re-organisation of existing relations in organised production. But the innovations are also technical, concerned with technology and the organisation of work practices.

From Just in Case to Just in Time: Re-fashioning the Relations of Employment?

The Crippling Cost of 'Just in Case'

Japanese manufacturers realised years ago that the cost of financing large inventories is far more crippling to corporate profitability than are labour costs. But many European companies are still wedded to the wasteful old doctrine of 'just in case' rather than the Japanese doctrine of 'just in time'.

Financial Times, 10 January, 1985

The social organisation of production in many advanced capitalist countries is now undergoing some substantial transformations. 'Just in Case' (JIC) here is a shorthand referring to a number of older forms of production which, it must be stressed, are still predominant in Britain, Western Europe more generally and the US. 'Just in Time' (JIT) refers to a series of newer forms of production being exported either by Japanese companies themselves or being adopted, often in adapted forms, by firms in the older industrial economies. Before examining how these new forms of production are, or are not, being adopted and adapted locally we need first to establish the difference between the two strategies.

The giant enterprise, employing thousands of workers and mass-producing standardised products is perhaps the dominant image of contemporary industrial society. The rationale for this type of production is also familiar; economies of scale, high volumes of production and the continuous speeding up of the production-process bringing ever lower unit costs and competitive advantage. Long production runs are also often the hallmark of the pre-assembly production of components, the overall objective being to minimise the length of time during which machinery is not being used. To this end large stocks of components and materials are often built up in anticipation of actual demand.

Now this type of assembly-line production is not of course the only form of contemporary capitalist production. It frequently co-exists with smaller firms or sub-organisations which may well be less technologically advanced but which are crucial to the big firm in terms of supplying components or labour on a fluctuating basis; dealing, in short, with shifting patterns of demand.⁴ Nevertheless, assembly-line mass-production using

specialised workers and specialised machines for long production runs is in many ways the epitome of industrial rationality. Henry Ford's car assembly plant established in 1913 at Highland Park, Michigan is perhaps the best-known pioneering example, and this form of organising production is often known as Fordism.

Associated with this type of production are a number of characteristic social and technical features. The whole process is based on very considerable levels of job specialisation; that is, the division of labour into large numbers of de-skilled and highly standardised work processes. And such detailed divisions of labour in turn need a whole battery of bureaucracies and managers to control and organise the complex production process. Furthermore, stemming from these social divisions are often (and this seems to apply particularly in Britain, the first industrial nation) a set of complex institutional forms; labour organisations, professional bodies, pay structures and demarcation lines.

Perhaps most important, is what is sometimes called a 'low trust system', workers typically being treated as little more than units of labour requiring intensive and regular surveillance and discipline. And indeed, such 'low trust' has often been justified from management's point of view. Large plants, by concentrating workers together, have often facilitated labour organisation, and helped resistance to managers' attempts to divide workforces. Furthermore, potentially powerful groups of workers are literally able to drop a spanner in the works and stop a whole production process by interfering with a small part of it. Indeed, one of the reasons for keeping large stocks of supplies and components under the JIC system is precisely to protect production from disruption. Nevertheless, 'central' and 'peripheral' workers form an important part of the way in which such a system is often managed. Key workers, such as those with particular skills and in key positions as regards the organisation of the rest of the workforce, are often protected (or protect themselves) under the older Fordist system and are given what has been called 'responsible autonomy' status; a measure of control over their own and other people's work on the shop floor. 'Peripheral' workers, by contrast, are typically treated in a more cavalier way. They are usually unskilled or semi-skilled, management exercising 'direct control' over their work as they are brought in to (and expelled from) the production-process in line with fluctuations in demand.⁵

The technology associated with JIC is also composed of certain characteristic features. Machines are designed precisely for long production runs, while components and semi-completed products are usually moved to workers on assembly belts. Large buffer stocks of materials are built up, just in case there is a surge in demand.

Just in Time

Recently, however, many of the characteristic features of Just in Case have come under severe scrutiny. The combination of crises in profitability, the weakening of labour and extremely high levels of unemployment, Japan's comparative economic success and governments (especially the Thatcher government's asserting the manager's 'right to manage') have all led to such a reassessment. But of central underlying importance since the late 1970s has been a questioning of many assumptions surrounding Fordist assembly-line mass-production. Apart from questions of productivity, conventional Fordism is not at all good at being responsive to changing and varied patterns of consumer demand and, with the widespread saturation of populations by standardised products (combined with uncertainties surrounding economic recovery) a key ingredient in the new competitive strategy is gearing up for variations in consumer-demand. In short, the key word, for management at least, is 'flexibility'.

The result is the adoption by the leading branches of capital of what has come to be called 'flexible specialisation'; the adoption of machines and control systems which permit short runs, variations in products and rapid responses to changing consumer-demands. However, perhaps the most important part of contemporary re-evaluations is that between management itself and labour. James MacFarlane, Director-General of Britain's Engineering Employers' Federation, has put capital's reassessment clearly enough to other members of the British service class:

Union members are not just union members: they are also our employees and part of our companies. If they feel a conflict of loyalties between their union and their company, it is surely up to us to win the competition. We can do this by rational behaviour and by showing some understanding of our employees as human beings, rather than as units of labour.⁶

The objective, then, is to develop an enterprise culture, workers loyally identifying with 'their' company, with unions being either marginalised in importance or incorporated on this new, cooperative, basis. Again, MacFarlane offers the keynote:

To the extent that trade unions have become less central to our operations, individual employees have become more so... One of the compensatory benefits of the recent recession is that people have come to understand, much more clearly than before, that their security and prosperity depend, not upon a government or a union, but upon the successful operation of the enterprise in which they work.

Needless to say, the new strategy of either marginalising organised

labour or including it on a 'cooperative' basis has not met with unstinting praise from organised labour itself. For example, Pete Kelly, President of the Michigan branch of the United Auto Workers (UAW) has said that General Motors dealing with the unions in this way meant 'the demise of the UAW and the trade union movement as we know it'.⁷

The new emphasis, then, is on incorporating labour (labour constituted as individuals rather than as a collective organisation) on a cultural as well as a purely economic basis. If a worker can, like a 'service class' manager, identify with the firm, activate his or her own creative skills and initiative, switch in a flexible manner between tasks as and when the need occurs, ensure that quality is actively built in to the product (rather than 'tested in' through wasteful checking processes after the product has been made) then this can be seen as a better bet to the firm involved, rather than constantly coercing an uncooperative, uninvolved and possibly destructive individual. It also appears to offer a degree of self-determination to the worker, appealing to a worker's initiative and giving him or her a degree of freedom in the work-process itself. This is a matter to which we'll return in Chapter 6.

The Electricians' Union, the EETPU, has been especially active in negotiating no-strike, single union, deals with Japanese and other companies. An example is Hitachi in South Wales, whose slogan 'With unity it is possible to achieve any target' is suspended above workers making TV sets. Here is Dilys Williams, the EETPU's local convenor, talking of the corporate identity being constructed in the plant:

The biggest change is the single union status where we now all have the same sick pay, all the same holidays. We all have the same overalls. We all have lunch in the canteen... er, restaurant. Even the Managing Director, he has the same overalls as we do. He sits down with us for lunch. If there's room at our table he will come and he'll have a chat with us. We're all practically the same. We all are company members now. Not just workers and staff. We are all company members.⁸

Another dramatic example of this kind of management philosophy is that being developed by Nissan at their new car plant in Sunderland. Here too the key idea is an identity of interests between labour and management. Workers' identity with management and with the success of the company as a whole is a key ingredient to the company's strategy, the objective again being to sell a well-built and reliable set of products. Again, this is actively promoted in the day-to-day running of the factory. As a team leader puts it:

We've got teamwork and the correct attitude. You've got the managing director standing behind you with his tray going for lunch. You've got

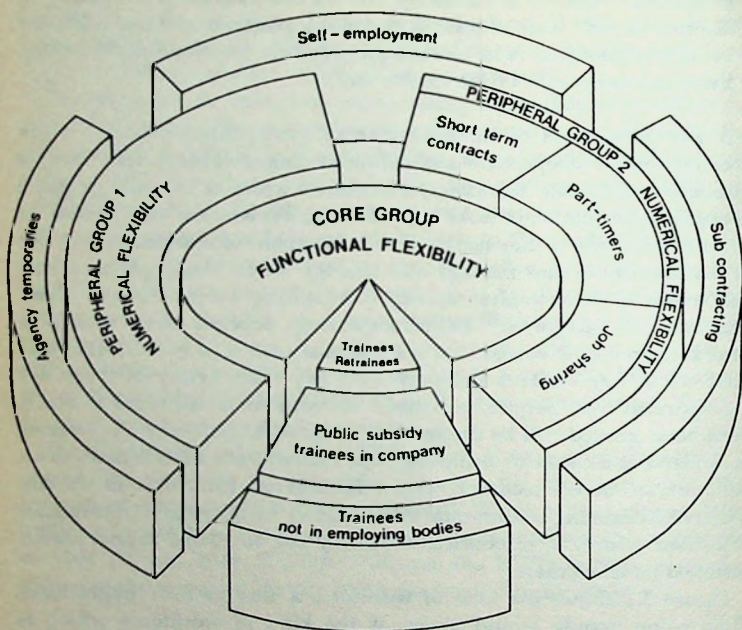
your one-status canteen that builds teamwork. It revolves around teamwork. There is a hierarchy but it's not evident. The managing director doesn't walk around with a black pinstripe suit and a bowler hat so everyone knows he's a managing director. Everyone just blends in. Everyone seems to be on the same level.⁹

A key component of the new kind of management strategy is the construction of a cooperative and self-motivating workforce. An important corollary is a 'flexible' workforce; a workforce which is not only prepared to engage in a number of tasks in production, but which is also 'flexible' in terms of who may or may not be directly incorporated into production. But in the case of the new management strategy we are dealing with a very deliberate set of strategies, actively reorganising workforces into 'fixed' and 'variable' categories.¹⁰ The actual strategy depends on the particular firm and process involved, but the essential idea is to recruit, train and hold on to key workers not only with key skills (many of those *not* incorporated may be just as skilled) but with sound attitudes to work. Peripheral groups will be drafted in to deal with short-term fluctuations in demand or changes in technology, but again the emphasis is as much on behavioural as on technical skills. Managerial control is much less coercive. Assuming a team-minded workforce identifying with corporate objectives, a form of 'responsible autonomy' can be offered to (and indeed assumed in) all workers.

Figure 3.1 shows the kind of workforce a 'flexible firm' might have. This, some people would argue, is the kind of workforce which is increasingly dominating companies in Britain and other advanced industrial countries. At the centre are the core groups of workers and service class managers. The group is working flexibly. It contains a small number of trainees who are, to an increasing extent, graduates. The core group of lower-level workers is likely to be protected by a union.

Around this core is a wide range of peripheral people, some hired directly by the flexible firm, others not. Group 1 includes people who are simply hired and fired and are unlikely to achieve career status within the firm. Alternatively, there are the employees in Group 2; hired on short-term contracts or recruited from groups (such as women in their late teens and early twenties) with 'naturally' high turnover. Other kinds of peripheral worker include, of course, casual or part-time workers as well as trainees paid for by the public sector. But towards the outside of the diagram are the people who are not directly employed by the core company: sub-contractors, the specialists and self-employed people taken on to work on particular projects for a fixed fee, or people provided by specialist agencies such as cleaning or catering staff. Again, the presence of all these peripheral people means that the core firm can be inflated and deflated quite rapidly, without too much expense and internal disruption.

Figure 3.1 The Flexible Firm



From J. Atkinson, N. Meager, 'Flexibility - Going the Distance?', *Personnel Management*, Aug/Sept 1986

Clearly, the 'peripheral' category of workers contains a very mixed set of people. Some of them are exceptionally low-paid people on the fringes of the formal economy or working in what is sometimes called the 'service' sector. (We will be returning to some of these people in Chapter 4.) Some, on the other hand, are self-employed and may actively want to be self-employed. They include, for example, 'service class' individuals such as accountants and computer software engineers who cannot rely on an even flow of income but who are nevertheless living a more than adequate lifestyle. However, even these latter self-employed people are unlikely to benefit from items such as paid holidays, sickness benefits, pension contributions by firms, training or assistance with house removal costs. Indeed, a large part of their attraction to the core company is that they do not represent demands of this kind.

The benefits of the 'central' and 'peripheral' categories of workers in this form are again put clearly by MacFarlane. He refers approvingly to the

increasing practice of engaging temporary staff on short-term contracts – sometimes in quite large numbers, and very often on pay and conditions that are not so favourable as those enjoyed by the full-time employees of the company. Obviously the employer benefits. He [sic] can employ temporary workers more cheaply in terms of pay and conditions than his regular workforce; and temporary workers do not acquire the same employment rights as do the employer's permanent workers. The regular employee also benefits as he [sic] has a greater assurance of security of employment when a down-turn in the market leads to temporary workers being laid off. Thus we develop the concept of a core workforce with a fringe of temporary workers and contracted-out services.

But again, the benefits for labour are at best ambiguous. For the Trade Union Congress 'flexibility simply means insecure forms of employment which will have detrimental effects on economic performance and working conditions.' Furthermore, the part-timers, pulled in and pushed out of work are disproportionately women.¹¹ Other kinds of flexibility need not necessarily, however, be considered so threatening for labour. Flexibility and higher levels of self-management might, for example, be a good thing if it meant that workforces were capable of diversifying their work into making new kinds of goods as demands for the old range of products become saturated. This is a matter we will return to in Chapter 6. MacFarlane's 'concept of a core workforce with a fringe of temporary workers' brings us straight back to the key question of unionisation. For an individual's acceptance of an offer of centrality could well bring with it some important undertakings. 'Obviously', MacFarlane argues, 'this essential key workforce would be required to be completely flexible in exchange for the superior conditions that it enjoyed. And it could well be, for example, that they would be expected to be members of only one union – if, indeed, of any union at all.'

Unions tend to be incorporated if and when they are, in MacFarlane's words, 'moderate and progressive minded', adequately identifying with corporate objectives. And it is at this point that the question of locality and the 'leftover' with which we started this chapter come in. The creation of flexible, moderate and progressive minded workforces is seen by MacFarlane (and many other managers) as far more feasible in out-of-town 'greenfield' sites than in what he calls 'the traditional industrial centres.'

Central and Peripheral Firms

Finally, there is the question for management of how 'core' firms and workforces relate to subcontractors. The older (and, arguably in Britain, still predominant) strategy is that of the central firms keeping those on the periphery very much at arm's length, using them (and in particular the workers within them) to shield the core firms and spread the commercial risks. But a second strategy is one pioneered by Japanese industry; that is, entering into something resembling a close and cooperative relationship with subcontractors, extending the consensual mode to a set of organisations whose day-to-day participation in planning and design are essential for both parties to succeed. The emphasis here is on controlling whole production systems, the dominant organisation using sophisticated computer-monitoring to control orders from subcontractors. It is this latter strategy which progressive management in Britain now seems to be attempting. James MacFarlane's advice here is that subcontractors should be included with unions and shareholders in the new syndrome of cooperative corporate success. 'Only very rarely should managers seek total victory whether this victory is over their suppliers (who charge too much), their customers (who pay too little), their unions (who are too demanding) or their shareholders (who are too fickle).' These potentially close working relationships between dominant companies and their subcontractors have, as we will be discussing shortly in relation to car-production, potentially important spatial implications.

The hardware equivalent of 'flexible' workforces is 'flexible' technologies and work practices.¹² The important technological development has been flexible automation. The breakthrough was in the 1970s when the invention of microprocessors, the further development of microcomputers and cost-reductions in hardware allowed the development of production machines which could be controlled and related to other machines by wholly electronic means. The importance of this lies in the fact that machinery can now, in principle at least, be very rapidly adapted for the production of relatively small batches of output. In this way industry is in a sense able to have its cake and eat it; benefiting from the cost advantages of mass production while being able to cope with unforeseen changes in demand. Furthermore, the new computer technologies allow for a more 'flexible' set of relationships between conception and execution. Design remains an intellectual problem-solving activity, one that cannot be wholly taken over by Computer Aided Design (CAD). But once ideas are formed, CAD can draft them out, calculate materials requirements and feed production specifications directly to the machinery on the shop-floor. Again, this not only facilitates much closer links between design and production, but (potentially at least) allows for the more rapid production of a wide range of different kinds of product.

But it is in the production process itself that the real meaning of JIT

becomes clear, and especially its dependence on human initiative. Workers carry out jobs on the line only when instructed to do so by the *kanban* system of communicating flags activated by other groups of workers further down the line. The intention here is to obviate the need for the complex and often over-bureaucratic long term planning of production and it means that another central objective of JIT can be achieved - that of reducing buffer stocks of components and unfinished components. Instead of building up large stocks under the JIC system, the objective of JIT is to reduce such stocks to a minimum and to be sensitive to fluctuations in demand. The reduction of these stocks (again, much facilitated by advanced electronics) greatly decreases the amount of inactive capital held by the company concerned, capital which may be borrowed at high interest rates and held in possibly expensive warehousing. And a small quantity of such stocks also assists in another objective of JIT, that of maintaining more rigorous quality-checks. The 'Right First Time' attitude to quality is an important one under this system; an attitude which firms try hard to inculcate into their core workers. All this, then, is a distinct alternative set of strategies for cost-reduction besides simply automating, emigrating or evaporating.

But we must not get too carried away by the hi-tech 'gee-whizz' syndrome. As we will be seeing shortly, such innovations have proved by no means easy to impose on existing systems of production in Britain. It is worth emphasising that these processes are crucially dependent on the most flexible item of all: people or groups of people who are self-motivating and have a good working knowledge of the part of the production-process in which they are engaged.¹³ Furthermore, such innovations are predicated on reasonably harmonious relationships between potentially warring groups: managers, process engineers and workers. There is a strong argument that while some of the problems of boredom and alienation may be overcome, they are replaced by new stresses and conflicts. The tendency is still for work on the line in a Japanese factory to be speeded up in much the same way as in a Fordist production system. The other side to self-motivated work in a cooperative team is increasing pressure on the individual to solve problems as an individual person, not let down the group in which he or she is involved. As a temporary 'peripheral' worker wrote of his experience on the line:

It was the silent coercion of the conveyor belt that I felt most strongly while I was working at Toyota. More precisely, it was the merciless directions from the control room at the Head Office. The number and type of vehicles to be produced are probably allocated to each shop through consultation between Toyota and Toyota Motor Sales Company Ltd. In the transmission assembly shop where I worked, iron flags [a variety of *kanban*] came down the conveyor belt to designate the type of cars to be produced. These were sent in accordance with the instruction

printed out by tapes by the control room. Seeing the colour and shape of the flags, workers chose appropriate parts from those on hand. If production was lower because of some minor malfunction of machines, the conveyor speed was increased to make up the delay. If production was delayed owing to a fellow worker's absence, overtime became necessary. Even without such incidents, production goals were always just beyond what seemed like the human capacity to produce, and no worker knew what time he might go home once he was in the shop. The workers were bound to the conveyors until they stopped, and the conveyors never stopped until the production goal for the day was achieved.¹⁴

Towards a Flexible Britain?

Such, then, for good or ill, are the main social and technological innovations which are well-established in Japan and now being introduced, albeit slowly and in modified forms, by Japanese firms to the older industrial economies. But are these new ideas for improving productivity and competitiveness actually being introduced by British companies? It is one thing to describe the intentions of the more dynamic sections of British management, but how these intentions actually work out is another matter.

The indications are that limited progress is being made and that, apart from some celebrated examples, the old forms of 'central' and 'peripheral' worker still predominate in Britain. Nevertheless, some familiar household names have been rapidly developing in the direction of 'flexibility'. And it is important to note that the firms adopting these new techniques are by no means always the manufacturers concerned. Marks and Spencer and Sainsbury's, for example, are retailing outlets. They operate computer-controlled systems in which they do not have direct responsibility for manufacturing the products concerned. Rather, they depend on networks of sub-contracted suppliers who are closely monitored as regards quality, hygiene and costs. Furthermore, computerised systems monitoring sales allow for the subcontractors to be rapidly updated as regards changing consumer demands. In the Sainsbury's example 12,000 products are codified by shop and district. Head office receives information each day after closing time and this is used to control deliveries and orders the next day. Perhaps the best-known example of flexible manufacturing is Benetton, the Italian clothing company. Here the head office in northern Italy receives regular sales up-dates from its 3000 European outlets. This information is then passed on to its many subcontracted clothes-manufacturers.¹⁵

These spectacular examples may be signs of things to come, but it is still not clear that 'flexibility' will be adopted in a whole-hearted way by British managers. As a recent survey of 72 (randomly chosen) large British firms puts it:

short term cost saving, rather than long term development dominated management thinking, save where substantial new investment was needed. As a result, we noted rather greater management interest, particularly in the service sector, in deploying cheap 'peripheral' labour, rather than changing the employment culture at the core.¹⁶

Between 1980 and 1986, the number of temporary workers in these firms had risen by a massive 42 per cent, the main objective being the long-established one in Britain of retaining a relatively well-paid core labour force while hiring and firing cheap part-time labour as and when required by market demand. Few companies, however, had achieved the 'functional flexibility' within the core group necessary to deal with changing technologies or patterns of demand.

There is also a question-mark over whether even British managers are being incorporated into Japanese-style family companies, with individuals devoting themselves to firms on a life-long basis. The indications are that managers in Britain are to an increasing extent working in small, relatively separate, firms. They are also transferring between companies quite rapidly rather than proceeding up the internal labour markets of large companies. Furthermore, their loyalties are as much to their localities (their homes, their communities) as to their companies. These are matters to which we will return in the following chapters.

One of the main ways in which 'flexibility' is achieved in the British case is through subcontracting. But subcontracting in Britain remains primarily a way of making the core company's problem 'somebody else's problem'; a way of spreading financial risk and reducing the wage bill for permanent staff. It is still a long way from the co-operative mode of contractor-subcontractor relationship proposed by progressive management attempting to achieve the success of Japan and other advanced industrial economies.

In short, a 'flexible' workforce amongst British companies still seems some way off. British capital (especially that in manufacturing) is tending to stick quite close to older low-pay, low investment and low productivity strategies. It is in the process falling uncomfortably between the twin stools of either adopting the new management-labour relations and technologies necessary for high productivity and competitiveness or adopting the kind of 'cheap labour' strategy associated mainly with investment in Third World economies.

By contrast, foreign firms, and especially Japanese or American-owned firms in growth sectors of industry such as electronics, are unencumbered by existing working practices and seem able to introduce the new working methods to Britain with relative ease. Whichever strategy we are discussing, however, the steady growth of a part-time workforce looks set to continue.

I want now to look at two sectors of industry, electronics and car production, to examine these processes of social innovation (or attempted innovation) in more detail. We will then be in a position to understand first the circumstances in which senior managers invest (or fail to disinvest) in an area and, second, the impact of these decisions.

Crisis, Restructuring and Locality

The Committee do not find the distinction between 'sunrise' and 'sunset' industries appealing.

House of Lords Report from the Select Committee on Overseas Trade 1985.

Microelectronics: a 'Sunrise' Industry?

The popular and relatively glamorous image of microelectronics is one of hi-tec gee-whizzery and unrelieved success. In fact, much like any other sector of production, it has had and is still having crises of profitability, crises causing new kinds of technical and social innovation. Nevertheless, microelectronics, a 'leading edge' industry dominated by multinational companies, is indeed one of the leaders in introducing both technologies and new forms of management-labour relations.

Here we will be examining both types of innovation, especially those concerned with the introduction of new social relations at work and their relationship to particular localities and the people and organisations at the local level who encourage or resist these innovations. These are not just parochial concerns. How (indeed whether) a multinational electronics firm settles down in, say, South Wales or Berkshire is at the heart of changes to (the rather amorously entitled) 'British industry'.

Cycles of crisis and restructuring in the semiconductor industry are nothing new. Present and past slumps are primarily a result of too many firms simultaneously investing in huge facilities with the expectation of dominating the markets. Over-production is the inevitable result, followed by drastic scaling down. But in the late 1970s and early 1980s, this decrease in investment caught up on manufacturers as demand for chips by the manufacturers of equipment once more expanded.

Today's problems in the industry derive not so much from collapse in demand, but from changing forms of demand, escalating capital costs of production and rapidly-rising costs of research and development. A further problem is the 'software bottleneck' – the continuing pressure to improve the relationships between the available hardware and the end-user. And all these types of crisis are leading to new forms of reorganisation, with possibly important locational implications.

Demand itself, then, is not so much the problem. Whilst the large-scale growth in demand for such items as TVs, hi-fi equipment and radios may

have slowed from the heady days of the 1960s and 1970s, this is being partly balanced by other developments in electronics (especially in telecommunications and defence) all of which keeps demand for the production of micro-chips relatively buoyant. But the kind of demand being made by the end-user firms is now changing. Whereas the semi-conductor industry in the 1960s and 1970s was making for the electronics companies standardised units without too much concern for their eventual use by the electronics companies, the demand now is for more *customised* devices, devices tailored more specifically to particular products, and more specialised and rapidly-changing consumer needs. Furthermore, the producers of the new equipment are anxious to make products and with exclusive features that cannot be purchased or readily copied by competitors. One important result of all this is the establishment of much closer working and technological relationships between these two quite separate sectors of micro-electronics.

At the same time, in senior management's constant search for increasing productivity, the automation of chip-production has been proceeding rapidly – again a partial reversal of the old chip-production days of intensively used (mainly female) labour. Today the pressure is on firms not only to produce more customised chips, but to produce them with semi-automatic equipment. And this equipment is extremely expensive. Glen Madland (Chairman of the Integrated Circuit Engineers Corporation) puts it thus:

Large manufacturers have no choice – they must automate to cut human error and improve yields. Even smaller firms serving the custom-designed-circuit market are moving to automation to enhance flexibility. And no company can afford not to offer the latest most powerful chips in its markets. Driven by such forces, the chipmaking industry is rapidly approaching the point where it will take a dollar of invested capital to generate each additional dollar of sales. Equipment costs already represent 10% of chip production expenses.¹⁷

Changing patterns of demand and increasing levels of automation are all part of a micro-electronics industry which is rapidly changing. For our purposes one of the most important tendencies is that towards a more integrated and flexible set of units within the industry, with manufacturers and subcontractors becoming more connected, more responsive to one another's needs and to the demands of consumers. In other words, the shift from JIC to JIT is happening in this 'leading edge' sector of microelectronics, as mass production is modified towards specialisation.

Whereas the production of semi-conductors was, during the 1960s and 1970s, dominated by relatively separate merchant firms, some of the large computer firms (such as IBM) are now manufacturing their own chips or

working very closely with sub-contractors on the design and production of semi-customised products. Many equipment firms now rely extensively on the skills (including, particularly, the programming skills) and the technologies of the chip firms themselves for the production of more complex products. Furthermore, these skills are required in a number of locations. The electronics companies have been to the fore in spawning large numbers of small specialist companies, albeit companies which remain highly dependent on the large conglomerate. The 'Fairchildren Syndrome' refers to such spawning; Fairchild being, of course, one of the leading electronics giants.

Another form of 'vertical' integration with similar locational implications is that of so-called 'forward' integration between manufacturers of chips and equipment, an example being Intel moving into computer sub-systems. These strategies of vertical integration have not always proved commercially successful, but again the end result is an integration between previously independent semi-conductor firms with the large firms, the latter gaining control over design and manufacturing and the creation of new kinds of multinational electronic conglomerates. At a more detailed level, a new set of more polarised relations is emerging between the social groups working in microelectronics. The semi-skilled production workers are, to an ever-increasing extent, being ousted as a result of increasing automation. At the same time they are being steadily replaced by unskilled machine-operators. By contrast, there is an increasing demand for more highly-skilled design, test and inspection personnel – as well as for software engineers.

As regards labour relations, managers of the leading microelectronics firms have been consistently to the fore in pioneering new non-unionised or single-unionised environments. The Fairchild Corporation, for example, actively excluded unions when establishing production in Hong Kong and South Korea, creating instead a 'joint consultative committee' of workers and managers. And Ronald Dore has vividly described the Hitachi company in Japan.¹⁸ Here it is not so much a case of the single union being a 'management union', but rather a broad assumption that there is no fundamental discrepancy between the goals of the union and that of the corporation as a whole. The reasons for the initial establishment of this particular kind of working relation in Japan are complex. They were partly the result of late industrialisation (and the absence of the kind of highly fragmented unionisation found in Britain), partly a remnant of the corporatist 'Society for Service to the Nation' established 'in the name of Japan and the Emperor' during the Second World War and partly a result of the active curbing of industrial militancy by the occupying forces after Japan's defeat.

What are the implications of all this for the location or re-location of microelectronics? It would no doubt be nice if we could present some simple

spatial image such as NIDL. But unfortunately this does not fit the reality. However, stemming from the kinds of changes and restructuring which this sector is now undertaking, we can put forward some connected propositions. First, the growing importance of the capital costs of production means that, in whichever locality they are operating, firms will be attempting to make maximum and intensive use of their large and expensive capital outlays. Capital in the form of money can operate on a worldwide basis, being readily switched between localities. Nevertheless, firms will be increasingly anxious not to waste such investments in fixed plant. Second, although outright re-location of plants from the South seems unlikely, it seems likely that Third World countries will now begin to lose some of their competitive advantages, particularly those providing cheap and relatively unorganised labour. Some Far-Eastern producers are now actually moving 'up market' to produce more capital and skill-intensive products. Third, the continuing vertical integration and concentration of electronics means that chip-manufacturing will be increasingly subordinated to and linked in with the whole of electronics. So to an increasing extent the emphasis will be less on the cheap manufacturing of chips *per se* and rather more on how localities are used by the new, more integrated, electronics giants. Fourth, there has emerged since the mid 1970s an increased emphasis on the industry being near markets. The need to be near markets has always been important for a range of sectors in electronics (though this has often been underestimated by the literature on multinationals' location) and it seems likely that this trend will continue; growing numbers of technically-unsophisticated users of computers needing close support.

The need to be close to markets is one of the main criteria which brings the US and Japanese multinationals to Europe, a five-fold growth in annual demand being predicted within West Europe until the early 1990s. So these new industries are settling in a number of specialised regions in Europe. This is one of the main spheres of job growth in south east England, with investment for hardware production concentrating particularly on the more 'peripheral' areas such as Ireland, Scotland and Wales. In these latter localities labour is (or is assumed by management to be) relatively plentiful, passive and cheap. But the problems of re-investing in all these older regions (regions with earlier histories of industrial production) pose, potentially at least, new problems.

South Wales and Berkshire: New Management-Labour Practices in Contrasting Regions

AS A WORKFORCE THE WELSH ARE ANYTHING BUT STRIKING

High tech industry hasn't been the only recent arrival in the Valleys. Hand in hand with the silicon chips and fibre optics a new attitude has arrived. The figures below are from a sample of ten companies, typical of those now establishing themselves in Wales. Between them, they employ over 5,000 workers.

And the difficulty was actually finding firms that had lost any man-hours at all. One Japanese company did suffer a stoppage; the national engineering strike of '79, which originated outside Wales. And the four American companies had lost all of one day between them. Actually, to be quite honest, there was also a ten-minute walkout at Siliconix, over greenhouse conditions in high summer at their factory. (Mopping their brows, the management soon agreed that a little breeze wouldn't go amiss.) Without the hiccoughs at these firms our figures would have been so saintly as to defy belief.

So what has changed so radically in Wales? Many companies now form their agreements with one union and one only. Which doesn't mean there are no disputes. But they get settled without any of the paralytic seizures of full-scale industrial action.

And what moved these companies to relocate to Wales in the first place? They wanted hard-working people, certainly. But they also came for the WDA's own industry: creating investment packages from a great range of sources. They came for modern factories sited in green fields. For excellent communications and good schools for children. And they came for the breathtaking beauty of the country. The one side of Wales that everyone always finds striking.

Welsh Development Agency advertisement, *The Guardian*, 23 July 1985

The attempts by the Welsh Development Agency to attract foreign multinationals (and, in the process, deny Wales's history as a centre of the labour movement) sums up the conflicts surrounding social and technical innovations in the old industrial regions. How do people and well-established social relations in the old regions (regions which may well have long-standing traditions of working-class radicalism) attract new firms' capital? And, if such investment is made, on what terms is it made? How is the existing working class and its union organisation modified? Similarly, from capital's viewpoint, what are the opportunities and limitations represented by the old regions? Is an existing working class an obstacle or an opportunity for capital? Is an existing pool of software engineers an attraction, or should a firm, anxious not to have

its key workers poached, move into a region less populated by its competitors?

Recent research has begun to show what happens when foreign multinationals such as those in electronics, with strong established standards as to what constitutes sound management, start to invest in previously-industrialised regions. The end result is complex; different regions (consisting of different existing class and social relations) reacting in different ways to new capital investment. Here, making particular use of recent work by Morgan and Sayer, we will explore how the new companies' practices combine with existing social conditions in the contrasting regions of South Wales and Berkshire.¹⁹

South Wales is especially interesting as an extreme case of how these collisions between an old 'radical' region and the new capital are working out. On the one hand, Wales is perhaps the archetypal working-class region in Britain. It has virtually no indigenous business class, the coal and steel industries being controlled from outside the region even in their heyday. And these earlier forms of work offered a high degree of autonomy to the working class in terms of job-control. A miner or a steel worker has not usually been subject to the kinds of detailed work discipline ('working to the hooter') characteristic of other kinds of production such as car-assembly. Furthermore, the Welsh working class has long been overwhelmingly male-dominated, female activity rates still (despite the recent changes to the area's industrial base) being the lowest in Britain. Finally, Wales has for long been one of the main bases of organised labour and the Labour Party in Britain with, again, unionisation remaining strong despite the growth of the service sector and the decline of mining and steelmaking.

Nevertheless, South Wales has been remarkably successful in attracting plants associated with the new kinds of industry, in particular those of the electronics sector. Indeed, the region now has the largest grouping of Japanese manufacturing firms (of which electronics is the most important element) in Western Europe. This is partly the result of the fact that the older electrical plants (those owned by, for example, Smiths, Thorn and GEC) were established in South Wales in the 1950s and 1960s. But it is primarily a tribute to the ways in which the new firms with their new work practices have combined with the well-established labour movement and selected *new* sources of labour.

Employment in electronics here is predominantly production or assembly work, mainly using skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled female labour. The 'feminisation' of the labour force in this region dominated by a male workforce has been one of the most remarkable features of the growth of the electronics sector; a feature at considerable variance, in fact, with the WDA's publicity showing a reformed male working class. In contrast with mining and steel production (where women constitute under six per cent of

the labour force) 58 per cent of the workers in electronics are women.

This is nevertheless, for women at least, a double-edged process. On the one hand they have been targeted by the new firms as operators precisely because they are seen as more productive than men, with lower wage demands and involving themselves far less with unions. In fact this perception may be only partially accurate. Six out of ten Japanese manufacturing companies in Wales do have productivity levels as high, if not higher, than their plants in Japan. It is not clear, however, whether this can be accounted for by the employment of women. On the other hand, such industrial disputes in South Wales as have taken place are often about equal pay and sex discrimination over job-opportunities. For example, a long strike at GEC Telecommunications was led by women in 1976. In 1981 women even ran a successful campaign against both the management and 'their' union, the aim being to being to get seniority status and higher-skilled jobs for women.²⁰

Nevertheless, the perception of women workers as hard-working and docile is one which has coincided with the predominantly patriarchal attitudes of unions, local management, and the male working class. The result is the very widespread adoption of the familiar stereotypes about what constitute 'men's' and 'women's' jobs; the feminised part of the workforce now making, for example, semiconductors, carrying out wiring tasks, soldering and the like. Ironically, then, it is in the sphere of gender relations that the term 'radical region' is actually least justified. It is precisely this cultural gap that the new firms have been able to exploit. And, to add another twist to the story, with the rise of automated production of all forms of electronics (including TVs, computers and telephone exchanges) it is now actually women who are being expelled from the labour force. The collapse of the consumer boom and the labour-intensive phase of production in the 1960s and 1970s has in fact resulted in a severe *de*-feminisation of industry in recent years. Between 1971 and 1981 90 per cent of South Wales electronics firms was female. So the 'women's work' can as easily be lost as gained.

Berkshire is hardly known as a centre of the British labour movement. Yet up until the 1960s there is also a history here of high levels of unionisation, especially in manufacturing. Food production, for example (one of Reading's oldest industries) was completely unionised. So too were the electronics industries in Bracknell, where the AUEW (a union of skilled workers incorporating a strong shop-stewards movement) and the Communist Party were well-represented.

But here as in South Wales the new companies with their demands for suitable labour and their new working practices, did not find existing unionisation or labour practices a severe obstacle. A key attraction for capital's managers here was, and still is, an existing pool of 'service class'

professional and technical expertise. An indication of the importance of these groups to microelectronics is the fact that in Berkshire 55 per cent of all employees in this industrial sector are in these categories compared with 32 per cent in the whole of the county's economy. Again, electronics employs twice the average of professional and technical staff in the county, but half the average percentage of manual workers. It is, then, these new sectors of industry which have created a non-union, even anti-union, climate in the region. And it is not only the British and overseas multinationals that have invested here, since around half of the employment here is in small firms employing under 24 people. Though some of these are genuinely separate from and competitive with the large multinationals, others are only nominally so. These smaller companies are also attracted by the non-unionised environment.

Local modifications to the new kinds of management practices have had to be made. But capital, increasingly operating at an international and national level, searching out markets and what seem appropriate labour forces, has been largely able to mould the people of a region in its own image. As a result, if Wales now broadly represents the 'production' end of the increasingly polarised class-structure of microelectronics, the M4 corridor has come to represent the 'conception' end.

Contrasting Regions and the New Management-Labour Relations

The new management-labour relations have been established quite rapidly, perhaps surprisingly rapidly, in South Wales. Compared with the existing firms in the region, the newcomers go to very considerable lengths to attract the kind of labour (in particular the labour with the correct behavioural characteristics) which they need. Bearing in mind uncertain levels of future consumer-demand the objective of senior management is not to hire the kind of large workforce appropriate for mass-production (a workforce which could become a severe encumbrance should the market experience a down-turn) but to hire a comparatively small stock of 'core' labour with, above all else, the 'correct' attitudes to the firm and to management's priorities. To this end, applicants are very carefully screened and tested. And such tests are examining not only obvious physical skills such as manual dexterity (skills which, incidentally, men and the old workers from the coal and steel industries are deemed not to possess) but a series of personal factors such as the worker being part of a 'normal' two-parent family. Recruiting of this kind, then, is designed to identify and weed out applicants with potential domestic distractions. The selection of the core workforces in Berkshire is also extremely rigorous, semi-skilled production and clerical staff receiving two interviews and professional staff as many as eight. For the production and clerical workers the emphasis is again particularly on behavioural skills (including willingness to train and to rotate between jobs) as much as on technical abilities. And for the professional staff, too,

skills (including the ability to communicate with different departments and with clients) are given greater importance than formal technical qualifications.

The attempt to acquire a workforce with such skills is again, whether in Wales or in Berkshire, primarily geared towards the construction of a 'flexible' workforce (although a workforce which will remain faithful to the company) and here too, albeit in different ways, the incoming firms are more actively involved than the older electronics firms in constructing such flexibility. In South Wales 'flexibility' means flexibility on the shop floor, rejecting as far as possible the rigidities associated with earlier forms of mass production (detailed division of labour and minimal discretion over the labour-process) and their substitution with work groups and quality circles adaptable to a range of tasks. In Berkshire 'flexibility' means, to a greater extent, flexibility for the professional, service class, workers. This implies not only selecting suitable personnel, but creating for them attractive career-paths, promises of 'lifetime' employment, fringe benefits intended to create and sustain not only flexibility but motivation. Unlike the production work which predominates in Wales, the white collar work in design, development and marketing in Berkshire is less standardised and open to potential inflexibilities as a result of professional expertise possessed and used by these groups. Management strategy here consists of highly *personalised* salary-inducements. These are aimed not only at encouraging flexibility but, especially in the Berkshire case, stopping other firms poaching such key staff as software engineers with scarce skills.

The individualisation of pay rewards and the separation of someone's pay from the 'going rate' is, for the new firms, an important strategy in the creation and maintenance of a flexible workforce. Again, the emphasis is on someone's personal or behavioural skills rather than on her or his technical abilities. Furthermore, it is a strategy which is more feasible in a company which either does not have unions or has a single union which broadly subscribes to this strategy of rewards. In Berkshire, an area which is relatively free of trade union organisation, it has been more possible to implement this individualisation of reward (indeed, Berkshire was the attraction for the companies precisely for this reason) with the result that people carrying out much the same tasks are, as a result of discretionary payments made for contributions to 'company performance', receiving quite separate levels of payment. In South Wales however, this strategy has not proved so easy to implement. The older electronics companies still have a range of payment structures and bonus systems related to individual tasks. Here groups of workers remain understandably reluctant to abandon the rewards resulting from their skills. Even the newcomers such as the Japanese firms are having difficulties overcoming these resistances, but they remain insistent that, in the long run, different rates of pay must be

achievable by people with the same technical skills.

All this relates directly to the question of how management's 'right to manage' is actually asserted. In both Berkshire and Wales active attempts are made either to use unions for managerial ends or to circumvent them completely. In Berkshire of course the latter strategy is generally feasible, work relations taking place in a 'white collar environment' where the distinction between management and labour is relatively blurred. In Wales too direct communication with employees is a key part of the new companies' strategy; a strategy that bypasses the previous extensive involvement of unions and especially shop stewards in the employees work-life. Management in effect ingratiates itself into, and indeed extends, the whole realm of practices which were previously the province of the unions, including sick pay, holiday entitlements, shared canteens, medical check ups and private health insurance. And this leaves the union appearing to be either unnecessary or, if it does not attempt to participate, anachronistic.

The introduction of the latest in advanced automatic assembly is a hallmark of the newcomer Japanese and American firms in Wales, along with 'quality circles' attempting to build in quality as the work proceeds, rather than 'test it in' afterwards. Interestingly, however, this innovation appears as yet incomplete, being adopted more by American than Japanese companies. Japanese management still apparently feels that neither the local workforce nor local management are yet sufficiently well trained to undertake work involving such a high level of self-management. Furthermore, many of the older British-based companies are prematurely establishing the outward form of Japanese management strategies (especially the introduction of quality circles) as it were 'on top' of existing, more coercive, management strategies towards labour. As Morgan puts it, it is 'as though the utilisation of behavioural skills was a question of [employee] willpower and [management] exhortation. Instructively, the Japanese in particular ridiculed this notion.'

Perhaps the most crucial question is, how do the unions fit in to all this? In Berkshire there is less problem of fitting into existing forms of unionism since the kinds of professional workers which predominate here are far less likely anyway to become actively involved in collective organisation. But in South Wales, despite (and even arguably because of) high levels of unionisation, the new firms are not finding the locality as hostile as might be expected. Indeed, the fact of high levels of unionisation has meant that for management the unions are potentially a good means of actively keeping the workforce disciplined and broadly co-operative in settling disputes. In the late 1970s a survey of US managers' perceptions of unionisation in this 'radical region' suggested that organised labour was far from being seen as an obstacle to profitability. Fifty eight per cent replied that they were strongly unionised but their firms were well

disciplined by their union. Thirty four per cent replied that their labour forces were not strongly unionised but that the unions were co-operative in settling disputes. Only eight per cent said their workforces were 'aggressive and not fully under union discipline'. In short, unions in themselves are not necessarily a threat to capital. They may be disruptive but, in protecting their members' interests, they can just as easily provide an ordered environment for capital accumulation.

Although for many of the Japanese firms their Welsh factory remains their only unionised plant, this has not (so far at least) proved to be a real obstacle in implementing the new working practices and assembling a flexible workforce. The key development here has been the active role played by the unions; in particular, close corporatist no strike deals with single unions. The EETPU in particular has been prepared to espouse 'the new realism' and strike up such deals and other unions are now following suit. In some cases this means that plant-level bargaining by the unions is being marginalised through the intervention of union officials at the regional level. The management of one Japanese plant has been guaranteed priority treatment by the union's regional headquarters... In the union's words 'nothing should interfere with continuous production'.

So in these ways managers representing incoming (predominantly foreign and multinational) capital have come to some kind of working relationship with labour in particular localities. Other strategies have been adopted in other localities. In Scotland, for example (another area close to a well-established centre of unionism and industrial militancy) a strategy for the multinational semi-conductor chip manufacturers seems to have been partly that of by-passing the unions altogether. But whilst these semi-conductor plants may tend not to recognise unions, they nevertheless give the same or even better privileges (in terms of pay, conditions, holidays, working practices) as those gained by unions elsewhere. In one celebrated case, IBM's workers in Greenock voted 9:10 against having a union! In the electronics sector more widely, however, the new US and Japanese multinationals are much more prepared to accept unions. Management, as in South Wales, often sees such recognition as a positive advantage to the company; a unionised Silicon Glen not being seen as threatening as another Red Clydeside.²¹

Car-Production: A 'Sunset' Industry?

Imagine a factory where no one has been on strike. Where no one has even been made redundant. Imagine if the managing director dressed just the same as the man on the line. Imagine if the management and the workers got together every day to see how they could make their cars even better. Maybe it would be possible to make cars so good you could guarantee them for three years or 100,000 miles. Is this just a flight of

fancy? It appears not.

NISSAN. THEY DON'T HALF WORK.

Saatchi & Saatchi TV commercial, 1986

If micro electronics is often, and inaccurately, seen as the new, crisis-free industrial sector, car-production is sometimes seen as the opposite; an older industry with a product that is basically 'mature'. Yet here too the stereotype is inaccurate. Many of the old assessments of this 'old' industry are now themselves being reassessed with, again, the Japanese experience showing that what used to be considered a mature industry producing a 'mature' product is actually still full of life if sufficient thought is given to the production-process. There are a number of interconnected parts to this reassessment, all of them with possibly major implications for the re-industrialisation of the 'old' countries and of the 'old regions' within them. These implications were initially discussed when, in early 1986, it became clear that the Austin Rover group might be sold to Ford of Europe and BL's bus and truck operations might (along with Land Rover) go to General Motors. Many people were asking whether there was any future for a comparatively small company such as BL. The answer is of course particularly crucial for the West Midlands, Rover's suppliers still forming an important part of the area's local economy.

What is the nature of this reassessment? We can best appreciate the new views by contrasting them with the old.²² The well-established system of car-production has been characterised as 'getting metal out the door', the prime objective being to mass produce large volumes of virtually standard products. To this end people and machines did one thing, or at best a very limited range of things. The production-process was, in the familiar 'Fordist' way, divided up into a massive number of highly specialised and repetitive tasks carried out by large numbers of increasingly de-skilled workers, whose initiative in the production-process was very strictly limited. The production process under this system is characterised by a series of relatively specialised work centres, separated from each other by large stocks of parts and semi-completed assemblies, all of which are reliant on conveyors and other kinds of transfer devices to move the stocks between work centres. Organised co-ordination, in the form of production-control departments, is the key to all this, for mass production with machinery dedicated to single products demands – perhaps above all else – the early spotting of bottlenecks, shortages and potential slow-downs. Here, then, was not only another kind of technical expertise in the detailed division of labour (the supervisor ensuring continuous production-flow) but another potential source of conflict between the supervisor and the worker with minimal control over their work.

There is a further important element of the older form of car production; the relationship between the assembler of cars and the organisations making the components. The conventional relationship, at least in Britain,

has been relatively antagonistic, suppliers being not only competitive between themselves but being at best at 'arm's length' relationship with the assembler. During the recession this relationship became even more stretched under declining market-conditions; the buyer 'squeezing' the components supplier to provide the required goods, often with very little profit to the latter.

Until very recently these relationships and processes of mass-producing cars were seen as largely 'given'. And the picture for car production did indeed appear to resemble a spectacular sunset. Market saturation by standard products in the advanced industrial countries, combined with increasing fuel costs and demands for environmentally more acceptable cars meant the future was represented by standardised small 'world' cars, mass-produced by an ever-decreasing number of large producers. The self-evident place for production seemed to be the Third World countries, where labour costs remained low and where people were still prepared to put up with the boring repetitive work involved.

Now, however, this perception is beginning to change, with implications not only for countries such as Britain, but for the often devastated 'old' industrial regions, such as the West Midlands, within them. The change in perceptions is happening partly because of a changing view of consumer-demand and, related to this, 'learning from Japan' in terms of production processes and how the social relations of production might be reorganised.

Again, it is to a large extent Japanese success, Japanese management-labour relations and Japanese production-processes which lie behind this reassessment. By 1980 Japan had become the world's leading car-producer outstripping the output of the European nations during the 1960s and overtaking the US by producing over eleven million cars. What the American, and now the European, firms are asking is: what has a leading industrial nation done to achieve such success? A large part of the answer lies in the combination of the new kinds of production processes and relations we have outlined earlier. In addition, a reassessment of demand has taken place.

The emergent view of demand amongst senior management in the car industry flies in the face of the 'world car' concept. Indeed, the 'locality car' might be a better term, since part of the new emphasis is that different types of product (luxury cars, small and fuel efficient cars and so forth) should be produced for different countries. Manufacturers, instead of attempting to build world cars, are now concentrating on producing what their own domestic markets want; and using their domestic market as a base from which to export. Further, even within the same countries, producers are now assuming that consumer demand is itself changing as different classes of people search out what appear to be more tailor-made products. The emphasis, in short, is on variation; variation between

countries and between social groups.

This brings us back to JIT, to systems of flexible production and flexible use of labour which are capable of dealing such variations. Mazda, Mitsubishi and Nissan are some of the Japanese car companies now organised not only for mass production, but mass production of a varied range of products. Formerly, of course, short production runs would have meant time-consuming, and therefore expensive, changes to the production machinery and the maintenance of extensive stocks. Now, computer-controlled flexible automation combined with JIT systems of regularly monitoring components and synchronising their delivery means that short runs of production are entirely feasible.

But it is above all the use of people in the production-process which is again the key to the process. The *kanban* system, the active selection and use of well-motivated people, building in quality, sorting out problems for themselves has made one recent enthusiast liken Japanese car-assembly to car-racing. 'The esprit de corps, teamwork, training, cool-headed performance under pressure and commitment to a common good that characterise Japanese workers resemble nothing so much in the West as the operation of a first-class pit crew during the Indianapolis 500.'²³

In a way reminiscent of some of the new divisions of labour being formed in the electronics sector, Japanese companies have pioneered a new set of relationships between final assemblers and components suppliers. Under the 'old' system of car-production the final assembler not only designed but actually manufactured core components such as engines and transmissions. Sub-contractors, meanwhile, competed for the manufacture and supply of components on the basis of the assembler's drawings. Now, however, the assembler tends to work in a more co-ordinated fashion with the components suppliers, the latter often themselves constructing core components such as whole engine units. In one commentator's words, the attitude of assemblers towards sub-contractors is changing from 'don't tell me about your problems, just deliver on time' to 'tell me about your problems at the outset so we can find solutions together'.²⁴

The implications for a region of these highly organised relationships between contractors and subcontractors are, at least judging from the Japanese experience, considerable. Satoshi Kamata (living in a company hostel as well as working on the line) graphically describes Toyota City (near to Nagoya) which, in the process of producing some three million vehicles a year, has virtually created a whole 'flexible town' of assemblers and sub-contractors. However, as a worker caught in the process, his account is less than glowing:

Subcontractors deliver parts directly to the conveyor belts. Assembly conveyors in each plant are subordinate to the main conveyors that ship out finished cars, and the conveyor belts in subcontracting firms are

'synchronised' to the conveyor belts in each Toyota plant. This 'kanban : method', which has been widely heralded in the mass media, is meant to compel subcontractors to deliver parts exactly on time, which is just another sign of the increasing 'synchronization' in the industry. Even the streets between the subcontractors and Toyota's plants are regarded as conveyor belts connecting the actual conveyor belts within the plants.²⁵

Car Production and Locality: a Flexible Industry in Britain?

How does all this relate to the import of these car-production processes to people 'on the ground'; specifically to people on British ground? This takes two forms: Japanese firms establishing their practices in Britain and British firms copying Japanese practices.

A Modern Plant on a 'Greenfield' Site

Until quite recently Japanese auto-makers, unlike those in electronics and other sectors such as textiles, had not internationalised. Circumstances in Japan, in particular their well-established industrial relations, the widespread introduction of robotics and their comparatively efficient relationships with subcontractors, all combined to give Japanese car manufacturing a significant competitive edge. Now, however, the picture has changed. A number of factors, perhaps the chief ones being increasing tariff barriers and demands for higher levels of domestic content, have led many Japanese manufacturers to establish overseas plants for production and assembly.

Nissan's recent establishment of a new 'green-field' assembly plant in Washington New Town (following their assessment of a wide range of other possible regions, including South Wales) should be seen in this context. Furthermore, the company's investment in Britain (and especially the new kinds of working practices which it promises to import) has been widely seen as heralding a new era for car building in Britain. As Norman Tebbit, then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, told Nissan in 1983: 'Nissan has high productivity. It has good labour-management relations. Everything is a source of envy for us. We want them to set up in Britain to demonstrate to our auto makers...these aspects of Japanese industrial management.'²⁶

It was the new set of working practices and new relations of production which were a source of envy to Mr Tebbit in 1983. And there is now every sign that this new green-field site will indeed be 'Japanised' to a greater or lesser extent. As often happens with Japanese firms abroad, the original model may not be implemented in full, being partially modified to deal with local work cultures and labour markets. One constraint for Nissan restricting full Japanisation is the shortage of local subcontractors. These are only slowly being established. But the hallmarks of the original Japanese model are already present. They include the familiar lack of

work-demarcation lines, the flexible production-workers (operating as part of a team and moving between different types of assembly) and regular monitoring by workers of quality-levels. This means that Nissan can now use the 'made in Sunderland' tag as a feature of their sales effort in Britain. A 1987 Saatchi & Saatchi TV commercial has a Japanese voice over the North East accent of 'Nissan worker':

I better interpret. His workmates and he recently visit Nissan factory in Japan. He had to part from his wife for a while. Pity.

However, he say that the Japanese did have some clever ideas about making cars. So, they took those ideas home with them. And thought of some new ideas of their own.

Now he say Sunderland factory make Bluebirds even better than Tokyo. And he is very pleased. So are the Japanese. Probably.

THE NISSAN BLUEBIRD. NOW WITH ADDED SUNDERLAND

As we have seen, however, Nissan managers' 'clever ideas about making cars' are not simply about manufacturing technology. They are, as Saatchi and Saatchi's 1986 TV advertisement (p. 66) confirms, also about the social relations of auto-construction. The appointment by Nissan of just one union (in this case the engineering workers' union, the AUEW) is potentially the most significant feature of Nissan's management-labour relations in Britain. Since winning a competition with two other unions to become the approved representative of labour it is now becoming increasingly clear that its influence will be marginalised. At Nissan the main organisational unit for negotiations over wages and conditions is the company council, composed of three British directors, two Japanese directors and six representatives of the workforce. The latter are elected from sections of the plant and, since there is no obligation for a worker to be a union member, the council may well by-pass and hence minimise the union's impact. And, as in the electronics sector, many workers are now seeing the union as of relatively minor significance in terms of improving their working life. So, in summary, here is another case of a foreign-based multinational able to introduce new kinds of working practices with comparative ease. 'Locality' (as constituted by existing patterns and relationships) seems to have a marginal effect.

An Old Industry in an 'Old Region'

The 'Japanisation' of working relations by new firms may be modified by local circumstances. But the adoption of the new kinds of working practices by British managers, professionals and senior technical staff in existing production centres is even more problematic. The problems start, of course, with the existing and deeply-engrained pattern of working relations. Even here, however, there are increasing signs of 'learning from Japan' and Mr

Tebbitt's dream coming true.

The long-term commercial outlook for a medium-sized car firm such as Rover may not necessarily be bleak. Nevertheless, restructuring for greater productivity and gaining a competitive edge (particularly over the Japanese) is seen as the order of the day. Furthermore, the attempted sell-off in early 1986 of Austin Rover to Ford and Land Rover to General Motors reinforced many people's view (not least that of Austin Rover's management) that the days of state support for the British car industry are distinctly numbered.

How has the British car industry actually fared? The point is, of course, that restructuring an industry in crisis, on an existing site and one where a particular form of management-labour relations are already well-established, is very different from Nissan's undertaking. The result has been adaptation; a slow but steady adoption of the new methods and technologies, again tempered by existing conditions and work practices.

The recent history of the British car industry has gone through three broad phases.²⁷ The early 1970s was a period of continuing expansion, with extra production capacity still available in the North West, South Wales and Scotland; a result of the period of rapid growth in the 1960s. Nevertheless, the rapid growth of imports (mainly from Western Europe and Japan) had started, approximately seven per cent of cars being imported in 1968 and over 26 per cent in 1973. The second phase was one of recession, followed by recovery in demand until the late 1970s. And it was at this point that some of the real problems of the industry became most apparent. For, although demand recovered to exceed the previous peak of the early 1970s, British car manufacturing proved unable to exploit the upturn. Production by the British-based industry fell by 900,000 units in this second phase to just over one million. Imports of all kinds have, since 1979, stabilised at around 56 per cent of British sales, an apparent increase of 49 per cent since 1968. In fact, however, this figure underestimates the true position since it does not take into account the increasing tendency by all manufacturers to import kits into Britain: only about one-third of cars assembled in Britain are actually fully manufactured here. The third phase has been one of drastic retrenchment and restructuring. Employment in British car manufacturing as a whole has been dramatically reduced by about 40 per cent from approximately half a million in 1979 to around 300,000 in 1984. Plants have been closed in line with what is now seen as market potential, new machinery has further reduced employment levels, while Vauxhall and Talbot have switched to the importing of kits.

Rover is now the only major British producer. Its recovery strategy is founded on reducing production to its two original locations of Longbridge and Cowley (though a question mark now even hangs over Cowley now), a limitation of its previously large range of products to only five models, the re-tooling of its plants with new machinery, the re-organisation of its

management-labour relations, and some restructuring of relations with suppliers. At the same time, and as an integral part of these changes, a joint venture with Honda was established, producing a middle-market car at the Cowley plant in 1986. In theory, then, Rover could by the late 1980s emerge from the ruins to become a relatively small but commercially competitive company.

There are of course a number of ways of skinning a cat and there is no self-evident reason why British management should adopt Japanese methods. BL and its suppliers do nevertheless seem to be partially adopting the new strategies. The overall plan, at least until quite recently, has been one of adopting new forms of automation to get volume and quality while using older, more abrasive, styles of management over labour as a means of achieving continuity of production.

The technology and the social relations surrounding the production at Longbridge of the Metro (a key product in the Rover recovery plan) illustrate these approaches. Automation indeed formed an important part of the venture but throughout the planning for Metro production, managers were primarily concerned to get tried and tested systems rather than absolute state-of-the art technology. As a result, despite the fact that flexible technology was considered at an early stage, relatively inflexible machinery and manual operations were given greater emphasis than robots; a decision which, in retrospect, was probably a mistake in terms of producing variations on the basic car. Nevertheless advanced computer-controlled production remains (particularly as a result of the joint venture with Honda) part of BL's agenda, the first element of a flexible system being the linking of computer aided design (CAD) with computer aided manufacturing (CAM).

But the greatest contrast has been in the sphere of management-labour relations. If the Japanese strategy consists of nurturing active consent from the workforce (and, in the process, marginalising the trade unions), the British strategy has remained (until the mid 1980s) coercive. It has been called 'Industrial Thatcherism' and it consists, crudely speaking, of using the threat of unemployment to frighten people into work and out of collective trade union organisation. Of central significance here has been the breaking-down of the system of the shop-steward system in the British car industry. Shop stewards' organisations became, especially between the 1930s and 1960s, the main way in which labour exercised a degree of control over car production. The reasons for their growing significance during this period are complex. They were partly a result of inter-union disputes and labour itself creating umbrella organisations to bargain effectively with management over pay and conditions. Partly too their power derives from the delegation to them of a high degree of shop-floor authority during the war years; this being insisted on by the state authorities anxious to press on with production for the war effort.²⁸

At all events, shop-stewards have long been relatively independent power centres in the British auto industry, their independence consisting of informal agreements with management about work rules and restrictive practices, demarcation lines, manning levels and the speed and output of production. All of these inhibited managers' right to manage; an issue which really boiled up in the late 1950s to mid 1960s with a series of large-scale stoppages at Longbridge over pay and conditions. Between 1959 and 1961, for example there were 23 stoppages at Longbridge and in 1964 seven major strikes. Furthermore, the area was one of the main centres of shop-steward strength, strike levels during this critical period increasing there much faster than in the British car industry as a whole. Shop-stewards, then, were seen by management as constituting a major threat to continued production and recovery. By the 1960s it was the stewards, and not the unions, who were assuming principal responsibility for negotiations with management and it was they who were instituting a series of unofficial strike actions.

The 1975 Ryder Report on the car industry included a measure of 'responsible autonomy' for the stewards, formally establishing for them a strategic role in the bargaining-process. But the arrival of Michael Edwardes at BL in 1977 saw the adoption of the abrasive 'Industrial Thatcherism' strategy. It consisted (and until about two years ago continued to consist) of a very firm assertion of management control. This involved removal of the shop stewards' influence and by-passing the unions through the direct balloting of their members. And indeed this strategy was relatively successful. Productivity was considerably increased through these methods, the number of cars produced per worker increasing from 5.9 in 1979 to 14 in 1986. Continuity of production and quality-standards also improved.

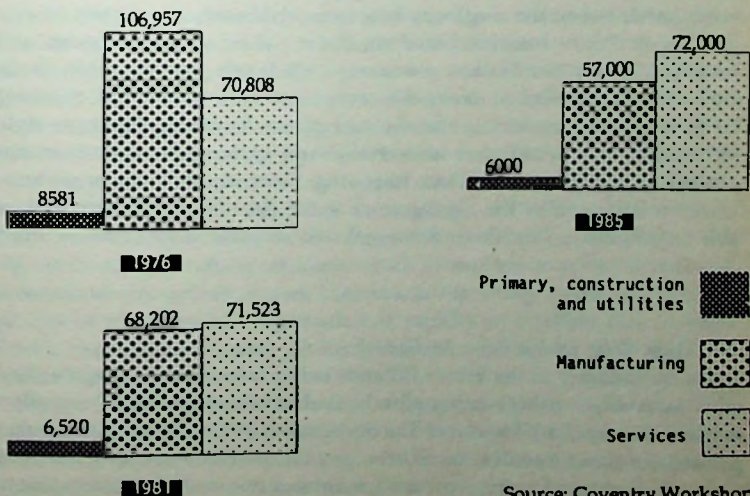
One of the effects of both 'responsible autonomy' and the more abrasive system of direct control was to create particular kinds of 'central' and 'peripheral' workers.²⁹ These strategies were (and unless or until the new strategies are thoroughly implemented still are) rather different from those of Japanese management. As a result, quite different kinds of 'central' and 'peripheral' workers are produced. The central workers under this regime are those considered by management as essential for the maintenance of long-run profitability. Under the 'responsible autonomy' strategy they would include the shop stewards. They would also usually be white collar workers and workers with particular skills which a company does not want to lose by firing them during a recession. But, as the recession in the car industry continued, even the number of central white collar workers was severely cut back. Peripheral workers, by contrast, tended to be the unskilled, with a very high proportion of women, non-whites, and young people. The distinction between 'central' and 'peripheral' workers under this system focuses on manual skills and the

possible incorporation of union leaders. It gives much less emphasis than the Japanese system on the worker's behavioural characteristics; whether, for example, he or she is a 'good company worker' and prepared to work flexibly.

One result of these strategies during the 1970s was to produce areas such as Hillfields in Coventry with very high proportions of peripheral and unemployed workers living in poor, and declining, conditions. What seem like purely 'inner urban' or, latterly, even 'urban' or 'regional' problems of poverty and bad housing can be directly traced back to the fact that here live many people who are peripheral to car manufacturing, either as peripheral workers to the main plant or with insecure jobs in subcontracting companies. Since the 1970s car manufacturing has been largely removed from Coventry. The local economy has declined and become increasingly dependent on companies outside the area. As Fig. 3.2 shows, services (and particularly public-sector services) have taken over as the main form of employment.

The Japanese system too leaves large numbers of unemployed or semi-employed people to fend for themselves in bad living conditions. But the difference between Coventry and 'Toyota City' is that people who have been taken on as loyal and hard-working (if not particularly skilled) operatives would not normally find themselves ejected with a downturn in trade.

Figure 3.2 Coventry's Jobs by Sector



Under the confrontational strategy, 'bushfires' of continuing industrial conflict continued in Austin Rover. Around 1983, however, a re-think took place; partly a result of these bushfires and partly a result of working closely with Honda and observing their methods. The Rover Group now proposes:

what it calls zone circles, in which small groups of volunteers will discuss all production matters and not just quality. The move is seen as vital to involve employees in the continuous drive for high quality in a fiercely competitive market. It also proposes to halt production lines for the holding of regular zone briefings at which supervisors, or mini managing directors, in charge of groups of about 25 workers, would discuss output targets and sales performance.³⁰

And in a form similar to that adopted by the Japanese electronics companies, applicants are being carefully assessed to establish 'not only whether they have the necessary skills but whether they identified with the aims and philosophy of the company'. The intention is, again, to win the active consent of the workforce. And it is important to recognise that this is by no means all bad news for organised labour. A union leader's comment on preparations for the production of the Honda car in Cowley is revealing: 'Suddenly they are talking to us instead of at us.' However, a fundamental set of problems remain. New technology and calls for a highly flexible workforce; the distinctions between skilled, unskilled, white collar and shopfloor workers being made much less distinct. On the other hand, unlike the single-grade system at Nissan, the system of pay grading at Rover remains based on older skills, social divisions and practices. The result is that workers at all levels (for example those electricians re-trained to deal with computers and robots) are claiming levels of pay equivalent to those above them. Imposing Japanese-style technology on an 'old' and well-established system of production has proved easier to achieve than imposing Japanese-style management-labour relations. Whether management in the British car industry will be able to achieve a flexible and competitive workforce remains an open question.

A 'Toyota City' in the West Midlands?

Is the car industry in the West Midlands being turned into a 'Toyota City' with assembly workers being closely tied into a network of suppliers organised around a JIT system? The devastation to the car industry makes projections about a revival seem very premature. However, as a result of moves by the components sector itself, involving massive job-losses, some of the most drastic steps in this direction are now being taken, although the

outcome remains unclear. We can divide this restructuring into first reorganisation within and between components firms (with 60,000 and 90,000 jobs dependent on the Rover Group) and second between the suppliers and the assemblers.³¹

The components sector can be further divided into three sub-sectors: the critical point concerns the rapidly-changing relationships between these sub-sectors. The first consists of small, labour-intensive firms, many of which are operating with low levels of technology (for example, carrying out body-pressings with relatively old plant) and with low overhead costs. These firms remain relatively cost-competitive, even compared with the low labour-cost economies of the Third World. Nevertheless, some of these firms have thrived by beginning to incorporate new technologies in the manufacture of such items as valves and springs. The second group is more sophisticated, manufacturing highly specialised and engineered components such as constant-velocity joints. They are now investing heavily in research and development and in the new product technologies. The largest number of components suppliers in the West Midlands, however, fall into the third group; and it is this group which remains in the weakest state. These are the traditional volume suppliers of items such as castings, forgings and tyres. There is now considerable over-capacity in this sector; a result of the decline of the British car industry, single sourcing by the assemblers and the import of whole units such as sealed gearboxes from Volkswagen.

Important developments here, as in microelectronics, are changing divisions of labour between assemblers and subcontractors: the objective again being to produce higher-quality products at competitive prices. There is a growing tendency towards the construction of whole sub-systems (for example, lighting systems, suspension systems, fuel systems) or 'sealed for life', 'black box' units rather than separate small-scale items. This particularly favours the second group of sub-contractors; the technological leaders. Either by adopting Japanese flexible manufacturing techniques or combining with Group 1 firms (which, as small low-technology companies are able to offer some flexibility in dealing with market fluctuations) they are able to cope with demands from the assemblers for high-technology products, changes which themselves may be transformed as consumer demand fluctuates. Meanwhile, the Group 3 firms are trying to get out of their diminishing market as rapidly as possible and, through drastic rationalisation and job-loss, they are attempting to form themselves into Group 2 firms.

For the Group 2 firms the influence of Japanese-style operations has been particularly strong. This applies to the introduction of flexible manufacturing systems, the linking of CAD to CAM and the transition to a more flexible workforce. As one manager of such a firm has put it:

We're looking to become a Japanese type of factory with high levels of automation, a small workforce and a high degree of flexibility. We see the only way forward as new technology in our product and our plant... We're looking hard at ways of improving our flexibility around CNC (Computer Numerical Control) facility. We're trying to move up the technological ladder... We expect to invest around £5 million in the next four years, mostly in CNC equipment as the first step in a CAD/CAM strategy.³²

The growth of research and development by the components suppliers, and production of 'sealed for life' units are just manifestations of changing sets of working relations between assemblers and suppliers. There are some moves now in the West Midlands (though their extent must not be over-exaggerated) towards constructing less antagonistic relations between assemblers and suppliers. This means a degree of co-operation and negotiation over the original design, over costs and profit-sharing and in terms of constructing a closer working relationship during the production process. Nevertheless, the relationships remain in many instances much less than harmonious and the outlook for many components firms (especially those in Group 3) is at best precarious. As one components manufacturer has said about the assemblers: 'They've squeezed all the fat out of us, now it's the blood that's going.' And Group 1 firms are in fact often unable either to raise the capital or to command sufficiently high prices to get out of their group. As one interviewee in this category has put it: 'There's some very frightened companies within a 20 mile radius of Longbridge!'

The locational implications of these changes in the internal structure and organisation of the West Midlands car industry seem at the moment unclear. One recent report, for example, sees the emergence of a new, centralised, 'Toyota City' in the West Midlands, with

very strong pressures for a recentralisation of component production around major car production locations because of falling economies of scale in component production with flexible working, the need for 'just in time' production-coordination and delivery, and growing involvement of at least the major component firms in a more modularised design. These pressures are growing and will become more significant in the future, further reducing the scope of low cost imports as automated assembly reduces the labour content.³³

On the other hand, suppliers of components also currently deliver to remote warehouses; this apparently being best suited to the dispersed spatial distribution of the industry as a whole. Furthermore, suppliers gain or lose as a result of high or low levels of stocks. So they, not the

producers, gain most from an efficient JIT system.³⁴ The end-result will presumably be a version of the original Japanese model, one danger being that British management will copy the apparent form of Japanese methods without accruing the benefits. As one commentator has recently put it: 'British managers love to latch onto the latest ideas, which they reduce to the level of gimmicks, and then wonder why they don't work. There's little evidence that they really understand what JIT is about and what it entails.'³⁵

Management, Labour and Locality

I now want to summarise this chapter and link its conclusions to the issues we'll be discussing later.

We have been looking at management-labour relations, localities and investment for jobs. The key importance of senior industrial managers is clear enough, although the decisions of this group are constantly subject to the demands of worldwide competition between firms. Localities emerge as relatively passive. That is to say, one option is to re-invest in established social relations and practices (with, if necessary, the development of new kinds of workforce such as women workers). The other, if established social relations and practices do not offer sufficient productivity and profitability, is to allow localities to go into decline. New, more profitable, investments may be made there later.

Note here that in discussing the decline of the car industry and its devastating effect on the West Midlands economy we are not talking about an industry which is universally in decline. We are talking about a part of the car industry which, until at least very recently, has had the oldest (and relatively unproductive) management-labour practices, and the oldest technologies and production methods.

The requirements for a locality tend to be set at the national and international scale; people in South Wales, the Midlands, Berkshire or wherever else having to achieve levels of productivity and profitability achieved elsewhere or their jobs will suffer. 'Locality' (for example, 'the North', 'the Midlands' or 'the South') is, however, an issue in a narrowly geographic rather than a social sense. Proximity to markets and production inside trade barriers, for example, remain an important consideration for some multinational corporations. Nevertheless, what makes a given area such as the Midlands or an inner city into a 'problem' is not so much geographical distance to markets but the fact that the older, least flexible, and therefore least profitable, parts of industry are located there. There are two closely connected issues here which link up with the forms of social change we'll be examining later. The first is concerned with the broad social implications of these changes and the second with the spatial and political impacts.

First, we have been specially concerned here with recent developments in the reconstruction of workforces: the development of new kinds of central and peripheral workers and the introduction of computerised technology resulting from new management practices aimed at higher productivity, profitability and flexibility to cope with changing market demands. It remains to be seen, however, how British management will adopt and adapt 'best practice' management techniques. The indications are that the old practices and relations still predominate.

Whether we are dealing with the older or the newer practices, one of the main recent developments during the present period of rapid changes in employment has been the creation of a dual workforce. On the one hand this means a growing army of 'peripheral people'; people who are employed on a temporary, casual or part-time basis. On the other hand, it means an elite group of people (managers as well as junior white collar and blue collar workers) with relatively permanent jobs. Let us look at these two groups in turn.

For the older kinds of management strategies in particular, one of the central objectives is cutting wage costs and the hiring of people who are not on permanent pay-rolls. Between 1981 and 1985 what the *Financial Times* calls 'the UK's growing army of part-timers, temporary workers, homeworkers and the self-employed' grew by 16 per cent.³⁶ Their numbers grew by 1.15 million to 8.12 million. At the same time the number of full-time workers declined by 1.02 million, a fall of 6 per cent.³⁷

Managerial strategies towards these peripheral workers might broadly reflect wider social prejudices, although their impact on different groups of people is difficult to predict. In an historical study of the West Midlands car industry, Friedman shows how women and black employees tend to be made the lower-paid peripheral workers whilst the white male employees (for whom unions are best organised) are more likely to be retained in the secure jobs.³⁸

In many other sectors of employment the better paid and more secure 'central' jobs are kept by white males whilst the less well-paid jobs and those with less authority are disproportionately occupied by black people and women. Recent research on race relations at work show that it is white people who tend to be given the more responsible supervisory tasks. In the 'skilled manual and foremen' category, for example, 26 per cent of whites have people working under them and only 17 per cent of Asians and West Indians. Blacks are, of course, more likely to be excluded from the labour market altogether. In 1982 UK male unemployment rates were 25 per cent for West Indians, 20 per cent for Asians and 13 for whites.³⁹ On the other hand, recent developments indicate that it is difficult to make any simple connections between social class and other forms of division and discrimination. This particularly applies to women. The rapid growth in part-time working has long been associated, in Britain at least, with a

commensurate growth in women's employment. The management strategies we've been discussing here have had, therefore, particular implications for women. As Veronica Beechey has put it, 'The desire for flexibility takes a gendered form, and in Britain today it is almost exclusively womens' jobs which have been constructed on a part time basis.'⁴⁰

She reckons that by the end of the 1980s nearly half the total labour force in Britain will be women. In the early 1950s, by contrast, the number of women in paid employment was about a third of the paid workforce. To a disproportionate extent (60 per cent of the part-time workforce is now female) it is they who, in terms of paid work, are the low-paid peripheral people.

It's at this stage, however, that the complications set in. Women are certainly those on whom the manufacturing and services industries are highly dependent. But, as peripheral workers, they are as likely to lose their jobs when they are not needed or when they lose the competition with men for part-time work. The general tendency towards part-time work need not necessarily be associated with *female* part-time work. Other capitalist countries have seen a growth in part-time employment, but this work tends to be done by male workforces. In Japan and the US, for example, part-time employment is male-dominated. It may be significant that the most recent employment figures in Britain show that the rate of the growth between 1981 and 1985 of male part-time work (21 per cent) was higher than that for females (13 per cent).⁴¹

These changes in forms of employment have important political implications. The marked growth of part-time employment means that there is now a large, and growing, group of people for whom the world of paid work and trade unionism constitutes only a part of their lives. This applies particularly to many women who, as I will be explaining shortly, are having to combine paid with unpaid domestic work. Their politics are likely to be affected accordingly. In contrast to them, however, we have also shown in this chapter how the new forms of workforce have the effect of marginalising the importance of trade unions for the permanent workforce. Both types of employment represent particular challenges for the trade union movement and it is, arguably, the public sector unions which are the strongest part of organised labour in Britain; a point we will pursue in Chapter 5.

Finally, within the category of 'peripheral worker' is a growing group of people at the opposite end of the social spectrum. These are the managers working for small enterprises, albeit enterprises which often remain very dependent on short-term 'flexible' contracts from large companies. The livelihood and well-being of this kind of senior employee is not so assured as that of the career managers slowly ascending the internal labour markets of their companies. The 'peripheral manager' must rely on her or his specialist skills and reckon on substantial incomes

stemming from the increasing number of short-term contracts which the major enterprises are now farming out.

As regard the core workers in the dual workforce, the increasing introduction of technology (including various forms of flexible automation) means that a polarisation is also taking place within this group of relatively permanent employees. On the one hand, the work of many blue-collar (and indeed white-collar) workers is being steadily automated or 'proletarianised'.⁴² The effect is steadily to reduce these peoples' skills, autonomy, discretion and self-management at the workplace. On the other hand, control and key management strategies are being increasingly concentrated in upper-level management hierarchies. This means the steady growth of senior managers and professionals; a service class elite with specialist skills, management expertise and making strategic decisions on behalf of capital. This highly influential service class in small and large organisations will, as I have said earlier, constantly reappear in this book; their significance spreading far beyond the workplace.

What about the spatial distribution of this dual workforce and its relationship to politics? The second main point to emerge from this chapter concerns the spatial distribution of capital's investments. We can deal with this question first at the level of regions within Britain. We saw in Chapter 1 how companies' headquarters could now, with the aid of new forms of telecommunications and transport, be geographically disconnected from activities such as production. One result of this has been a new spatial division of labour, with large armies of middle class professionals in producer services and administration particularly concentrated in the South East. By contrast, employers can now locate their production plants almost anywhere in Britain. Manual work is increasingly de-skilled. Whereas a nineteenth century employer was geographically limited by skills that were regionally specific (cotton in Lancashire, shipbuilding in Clydeside and so on) the breaking down of skills means that capital is no longer inhibited in this way. Wage rates for manual workers, levels of unemployment and skills are, to an increasing extent, homogeneous throughout the country.

This should, incidentally, make us very wary of loose references to the 'prosperous South East'. The massive concentration of senior white-collar workers in this region can easily blind us to the fact that the great majority of employees in this region are *not* senior managers and are not necessarily better off than similar workers in other regions. Indeed, in certain respects they can be worse off. Wages for manual workers in the South East are much the same as in other regions, while living costs (especially those of housing) can of course be much higher. Similarly, the recent tendency has been for male and female unemployment rates in the South East to 'catch up' with, for example those in East Anglia, the South

West and the East Midlands.⁴³

Such is the broad regional picture of differences and similarities. What about the developments within regions? Employment is decentralising. Whilst the old plants and the old relations of production are being partly abandoned in the inner urban areas, capital is investing in 'green', flexible and under-unionised labour outside the urban areas. So during the post-war period there has been a spectacular growth of 'rural' areas, the result being an increasing similarity in the economic base of urban and rural districts.

As Table 3.1 shows, the less populated 'rural' areas in the crescent starting from East Anglia passing through London and continuing to the South West and Wales has seen the greatest population gains in manufacturing growth. Within these regions, however, the larger settlement centres (containing the older forms of production) have dramatically declined whilst the smaller towns and rural areas have rapidly increased in size. This is clear from Table 3.2.

Table 3.1 Manufacturing Employment Change by Region, 1952-79 (per cent)

East Anglia	+70.3
South West	+25.7
Wales	+17.5
East Midlands	+11.4
North	+7.8
West Midlands	
South East Yorks. & Humberside	-13.7
Scotland	-18.4
North West	-24.5
Northern Ireland	-27.4
UK	-7.8

Source: S. Fothergill, G. Gudgin, *Unequal Growth: Urban and Regional Employment Change in the UK* (London, Heinemann, 1982)

This process of 'counter-urbanisation' is now a feature of many advanced capitalist societies. It first became apparent in the US in the early 1970s and it is now a feature of many European countries, including Germany, France, Holland, North and Central Italy and Scandinavia. All these countries are, to differing extents, experiencing a process whereby the administration and control in multinational corporations is being separated from routine production (and located in, say, Frankfurt, Paris

and Amsterdam) while production is being located in small towns and rural areas such as Brittany, Ireland and Spain. Again, it is in the latter areas where labour is more flexible, where there is a ready supply of female workers. An added attraction for the multinationals is the continuing availability of government grants to improve the prospects of these peripheral areas.⁴⁴

Table 3.2 Manufacturing Employment by Type of Area 1959-75 (per cent)

London	-37.8
Conurbations	-15.9
Free standing cities	+4.8
Industrial towns	+16.3
County towns	+28.8
Rural areas	+77.2
GB	-5.2

(Source: see Table 3.1)

As Chapter 4 will show, this movement of capital and the establishment of new industrial areas outside the old conurbations has very considerable implications for local political alignments. Until the new phase of counter-urbanisation, many regions had distinctively specialised economies; Wales and coalmining, East Anglia and agriculture, the North East and shipbuilding, and so on. Much of this specialisation persists. On the other hand this kind of association between a particular region and a particular sector of the economy is slowly being broken down. One result of this is that local political cultures based on particular economies and distinctive labour markets ('radical' South Wales and 'red' Clydeside being good examples) are also being eradicated. This has undermined the traditional bases of the labour movement and the Labour Party in the inner urban areas. On the other hand, new forms of politics ('the new urban left') have, as we'll see later, been developing in the old areas and developing strategies for areas of social life outside paid work; racism and the position of women for example.

A related result of this counter-urbanisation has been the undermining of the centres of trades union power. Clearly, the recent decline of trade union support (the drop of 2.5 million members since the late 1970s being one measure) cannot be attributed solely to the movement of capital from the old centres of union organisation. On the other hand, the movement of jobs away from the old centres (such as the West Midlands) and towards the rural areas is at least partly a result of capital escaping from the least

flexible and most organised labour to find more pliable and less militant labour elsewhere.

The impact on the unions based in manufacturing industries has in many cases been devastating. A good example is the AUEW, a union which is widely spread across manufacturing industry and is not associated with a particular region. In 1951 the AUEW had 3,500 more members in its old base areas (London, Lancashire, Birmingham/Coventry, South Wales, Glasgow) than in the rest of the country. But by 1979 these areas had 120,000 *fewer* members than in the Union's previously peripheral areas. Furthermore, the decline in the Union's overall numbers has undergone substantial regional variations. Between 1979 and 1981, for example, total membership fell by 17 per cent. But the fall in the Union's old 'heartlands' was 22 per cent.⁴⁵

The new, more decentralised, forms of investment also pose difficulties for trade unionism. Compared with the old mass-production centres in the towns, the new factories in the rural areas are often small. Either they are literally small, relatively separate, businesses or they are part of the shift to 'producer services', a shift which, as we have seen earlier, is partly a result of the large companies subcontracting certain more specialised aspects of their work. In either case, the growth in small and dispersed units of production and services is, for trade unions, less easy to organise than centralised mass-production factories in the old urban areas.

The changes in the realm of employment that we've been discussing here need to be seen in relation to 'civil society'. The separation of control from production, the disinvestment from the inner urban areas and the centrifugal expansion into the 'rural' areas are both cause and consequence of the great growth of owner-occupation. In 1945 about a quarter of households in Britain were in owner-occupation. The figure is now over 60 per cent and is still rising. This tenure offers, as we'll be seeing, considerable prospects for monetary gain. Furthermore, the home (and the gains to be made by owner-occupation) represents yet another basis for political action which is relatively separate from the realm of production and employment. We'll be exploring this with two more Mass Observation Archive people in the next chapter.

Finally, we need to remember that throughout this discussion we have been treating employees as individuals who do not live in households or communities. As we'll now see, when we start looking at these individuals' relationships in the home, we find it is best to talk of central and peripheral households rather than isolated central and peripheral 'people'.

Notes

1. This comes from A. Fuentes, B. Ehrenreich, *Women in the Global Factory* Institute for New Communications (Boston: South End Press, 1983), pp. 6-7. A key book as regards 'NIDL' is F. Frobel et al., *The New International Division of Labour* (Cambridge University Press, 1980). For a detailed criticism and development of the concept see R. Jenkins, 'Divisions over the New International Division of Labour', *Capital and Class* 22 (Spring 1984).
2. This quote comes from A. Altshuler et al., *The Future of the Automobile* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1984), p. 176. This is an important book on current developments in car production and has been used as a constant reference in this chapter.
3. Juan Rada is quoted in D. Ernst, *The Global Race in Microelectronics: Innovation and Corporate Strategies in a Period of Crisis* (Frankfurt, 1975).
4. For an excellent example of the older forms of management-labour relations (and their use in the car industry) see A. Friedman *Industry and Labour* (London: Macmillan, 1977), Part 5 in particular. The construction industry in Britain is another good example of the extensive use of 'central' and 'peripheral' workers. See, for example, P. Dickens et al., *Housing, States and Localities* (London: Methuen, 1985).
5. 'Responsible autonomy' and 'direct control' management strategies are outlined in Friedman, *Industry*.
6. J. MacFarlane 'Developing Top Level Policies for a Positive Management Style', paper given to the National Conference of the Institute of Personnel Management, 17 October 1985. At the time of writing MacFarlane is Director General of the Engineering Employers' Federation.
7. Quoted in 'Saturn - Sign of Collaboration', *International Labour Organisation Report*, no. 12, November/December 1985, p. 7.
8. *Weekend World*, ITV, 16 February 1986.
9. *Money Programme*, BBC, 13 April 1986.
10. On flexible workforces see in particular: J. Atkinson, 'Planning for an Uncertain Future' in *Manpower Policy and Practice* (Aldershot: Gower 1985). This whole issue has a number of useful articles on flexible workforces and their implications.
11. These TUC warnings on flexible workforces are reported in *Financial Times*, 30 December 1985.
12. On the new automated technologies, see in particular R. Kaplinsky, *Automation* (London: Longman, 1984). For a partial critique and a full discussion of 'JIT' and 'JIC', see A. Sayer 'New developments in manufacturing: The just-in-time system', *Capital and Class* 30 (Winter 1986). Factory automation represents a major capital outlay and it seems many companies are now having second thoughts on it. See I. Rodger, 'Factory Automation. A surprisingly rough ride for almost every-

body', *Financial Times*, January 1986.

13. For an indication that all is not necessarily harmonious amongst Japanese workforces see 'Stirrings of revolt over the company man ethos' *Guardian*, 24 January 1986, and S. Kamata, *Japan in the Passing Lane* (London: Unwin, 1984).

14. Kamata, *Japan*, pp. 200-201.

15. See R. Murray 'Ownership, Control and the Market', *New Left Review* 164, (July/August 1987).

16. On the (non)application of flexible working practices by British management, see J. Atkinson, N. Meager, 'Flexibility - Going the Distance?' *Personnel Management*, August/September 1986. On the (better publicised) movement towards flexibility and single-union deals, see P. Bassett, *Strike Free*, (London: MacMillan, 1986). For a more general discussion of 'flexible specialisation, and the extent to which it has been introduced into different industrial economies, see M. Piore, C. Sabel, *The Second Industrial Divide* (New York: Basic Books, 1984). In Chapter 9 they link the extent to which firms in different countries drift into the new practices or continue the old forms of mass production with the histories of industrial development in different areas. Countries whose economies are well-established around conventional mass production such the US and France (and, presumably by extension, Britain) are least likely, they argue, to engage in flexible specialisation. Countries such as Japan and Italy which still have the vestiges of craft production (and are thereby more adaptable to changes to production generated by changes in consumer demand) are more likely to shift in the direction of flexible specialisation. See also C. Sabel, *Work and Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1982). Here Sabel argues that decentralisation of production into small-scale firms in Italy can be explained by the fact that the mass-production assembly-line factories were controlled by militant shop stewards.

17. Quoted in Ernst, *The Global Race*, p. 23.

18. R. Dore, *British Factory, Japanese Factory* (University of California, 1973).

19. Especially K. Morgan 'Social Innovation and the Electronics Industry: examples from South Wales and the English Sunbelt', mimeo, University of Sussex, April 1985 and K. Morgan, A. Sayer, 'A 'modern' industry in a 'mature' region: the remaking of management-labour relations' in *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, vol.9 no.3, 1985. See also their book *The Microcircuits of Capital* (Oxford: Polity, 1988). A pioneering text in the whole field of changing and varied work relations in contemporary Britain is D. Massey, *Spatial Divisions of Labour* (London: Macmillan, 1984).

20. On the high productivity levels of Japanese plants in Wales see 'Japanese "very happy with Welsh productivity levels"', *Financial*

Times, 20 September 1987.

21. Morgan, 'Social Innovation'.

22. This is based on W. Abernathy et al., *Industrial Renaissance* (New York: Basic Books, 1983). See also Altshuler, *The Future and West Midlands County Council Economic Development Unit, The West Midlands Automobile Components Industry*. Recent Changes and Future Prospects, Sector Report no.4.

23. Quoted in Abernathy et al., *Industrial Renaissance*, p. 85.

24. Quoted in Altshuler et al., *The Future*, p. 189-90.

25. Kamata, *Japan*, p. 199-200.

26. Quoted in *ILO Report* 12.

27. See *West Midlands Automobile Components Industry*; Also P. Willman, G. Winch, *Innovation and Management Control. Labour Relations at BL Cars* (Cambridge University Press, 1985) and D. Marsden et al., *The Car Industry* (London: Tavistock, 1985).

28. On the history of the shop stewards movement in the car industry see J. Zeitlin, 'The Emergence of Shop Steward Organisation and Job Control in the British Car Industry: a Review Essay', *History Workshop* 10, 1980.

29. On the shop stewards in Birmingham, see A. Sutcliffe, *History of Birmingham*, vol. 3, (Oxford University Press, 1974). On 'central' workers, 'peripheral' workers and Hillfields in Coventry, see Friedman, *Industry*.

30. *Financial Times*, 20 January 1986.

31. This is based on *West Midlands Automobile Components Industry*.

32. *Ibid.*

33. *Ibid.*

34. R. Lammings 'Technical Change and Buyer-Supplier Relationships in the UK Automotive Component Industry', paper for Operations Management Association Conference, Warwick University, January 1986.

35. A. Sayer, private communication.

36. On the growth of part-time employment in the manufacturing and services sector and its impact on women, see I. Bruegel, 'The Reserve Army of Labour 1974-1979', *Feminist Review* (ed.) *Waged Work: a Reader* (London: Virago, 1986) and V. Beechey 'The Shape of the Workforce to Come', *Marxism Today*, August 1985.

37. 'UK "flexible" labour force up 16% in 4 years', *Financial Times*, 5 February 1987.

38. A. Friedman, *Industry*

39. C. Brown, *Black and White Britain* (London: Heinemann, 1984).

40. V. Beechey, 'The Shape of the Workforce'.

41. *Financial Times*, 5 February 1987.

42. As regards the automation of white collar work, certain banks, for example, are now reducing the independence and autonomy of their local branch managers. Providing loans is increasingly reliant on a broad statistical assessment of an individual's credit-worthiness rather than a

detailed interview probing every aspect of a person's life. This means the branch manager can be turned into something of a clerk, an ordinary worker who need not be 'trusted'. Meanwhile the bank's decision-making is increasingly carried out by senior-level service-class executives. See J. Child, 'Information Technology and the New Service Class' in K. Purcell et al., (eds.) *The Changing Experience of Employment* (London: MacMillan, 1986).

43. M. Savage, mimeo, University of Sussex, 1987.

44. See, for example, A. Fielding 'Counterurbanisation' in M. Pacione (ed.) *Population Geography: Progress and Prospect* (London: Croom Helm, 1986).

45. For a full survey see D. Massey, N. Miles, 'Mapping Out the Unions' *Marxism Today*, May 1984.

4

Class, Civil Society and the Politics of Locality

So far we have been looking almost entirely at the sphere of paid work. But how do all these changes in the geographical distribution of paid work and the new kinds of management-labour practices relate to other spheres of social life? In this chapter I want to establish the main factors and social divisions affecting 'civil society', or social life outside paid work. I also want to establish some of the connections between paid work, civil society and the changing forms of politics in contemporary Britain. This can best be done by seeing how some of the more general processes affecting civil society and the provision of jobs combine in certain places and times for certain kinds of people and households.

There is a wide range of relationships, contests and struggles outside employment in which people are attempting either to reinforce their positions or to resist various forms of inequality and exploitation outside employment. As we saw in Chapter 1, it is sometimes argued that these struggles (over, for example, housing, gender relations in the home, 'community' politics) now form a more important feature of politics in advanced capitalist countries than the class relations formed in the workplace.¹ This argument is partly accurate. As we'll see later in this chapter, for example, questions of house tenure and gender are central elements in affecting people's well-being and politics. We will also consider this argument in Chapter 4.

But the central aim here is not so much to treat lives and struggles outside paid work as separate from employment. My first objective is to demonstrate how actions outside employment combine (in quite systematic ways) with struggles at the workplace to affect the well-being of individuals and households. Second, I will be arguing that such combinations provide us with a basis for understanding people's politics.

Locality is especially important in examining the combinations of factors affecting people's lives and the forms of politics which emerge. Self evidently, localities (the sites of people's everyday lives) are the social contexts in which combinations of this kind take place. Similarly, studying people in their spatial context allows us to see who is really gaining and who is really losing as a result of these combinations. I will be arguing here that there is a tendency for those who are already in

relatively privileged class and gender positions in relation to paid work (especially, the 'service class') to further strengthen their positions when it comes to civil society. The obverse to this is that those who are already marginalised in relation to employment are losing out still further when it comes to their lives outside the workplace. This tendency will become one of the main themes in this discussion. It is a tendency which, again, underlies people's political alignments.

To illustrate how circumstances of paid work can combine with aspects of civil society to affect social relationships, personal relationships and politics I will, towards the end of this chapter, be helped by two more contributors to the Mass Observation Archive. They are two women who, as part-time workers and as members of two-income households, are in roughly the same position in relation to employment. Nevertheless, they illustrate how circumstances outside paid employment can dramatically change their circumstances and their politics.

Civil Society: the Sphere of Personal Freedom?

Before that, however, we need to establish what 'civil society' actually is; its main elements, the processes which constitute it and its form in contemporary Britain. 'Civil society' refers to those parts of social life outside the realms of paid work and the state. Nevertheless, as I have said, there are close relationships between civil society, formal employment and the state. More precisely, the term refers to three main spheres of social life. First, the sphere of reproduction; how people, their capacity to undertake paid work and the relationships between people (between, for example, men and women) are constantly reproduced and changed. Second is the realm of consumption and the circulation of capital; the buying and selling of commodities (as distinct from their production) with people and households acting as consumers rather than as producers. Third, there is a whole range of struggles and contests which are relatively separate from those in paid work.²

Later we'll be seeing individuals and groups organising on a number of bases other than those of employment; around, for example, the protection of domestic property values, around the protection of what they see as 'their' neighbourhood. We'll be seeing them organising around a number of other bases besides class and property: for example race. As I have suggested, however, we would be unwise to treat these struggles as completely separate parts of people's lives. They form just part of people's experience and, as such, just one basis of their politics. 'Civil society' is in fact something of a catch-all term, referring to a wide set of relationships and processes. Not only does it include the buying and selling of commodities, but a varied range of ways in which society reproduces itself. This can take place through the exchange of commodities (such as the

buying and selling of houses and food) but it can take other forms such as unpaid domestic labour and the various forms of mutual assistance given by friends, neighbours and relatives. The reproduction of labour can also, of course, take the form of various forms of state or collective provision; a point to which we will return in the next chapter. Similarly, as we'll see, civil society contains a diverse array of struggles; those around housing tenure, for example, or those around gender and race.

In short, civil society (consumption, reproduction and struggle) can take a varied range of forms. So an adequate understanding of civil society and its significance actually needs to be more precise than this rather descriptive term allows. We need to examine how people's position in paid work intersects with a number of other aspects of social life; the tenure of their home, for example, their positions in work, their relationships within the home and their links with the wider community. It's this search for more precision which brings us to locality, since it's again in specific spatial contexts that these relationships and linkages take place.

Social life outside employment has a special significance for us. It is above all here, outside paid labour, where individuals and groups can establish their personal identities. In furnishing homes in certain ways, consuming certain types of food and drink, dressing in certain kinds of clothes, driving round in certain kinds (and conditions) of cars, forming certain kinds of social and personal relations people can, with a relatively high degree of freedom and self-determination, create their own personal and social identities. And in civil society they can do this, the argument goes, to an extent not usually possible in the sphere of production and paid work. If civil society is a realm of social life in which individuals and groups can construct their identities and gain a sense of personal autonomy this again gives locality a special significance. The home, the street, the neighbourhood or even the town and the region are important ways in which people identify and distinguish themselves. Furthermore, many of us will go to great (sometimes seemingly irrational) lengths to protect what we see as 'our' street, 'our' neighbourhood or even 'our' region.

Marx was one of the first to make the distinction between, on the one hand, the labourer forced to work hard (and, in the process, lose much of his or her personal identity) and, on the other hand, the 'same' labourer who, in buying commodities, becomes an individual with freedom of choice. In exchanging wages for a commodity, he argued, 'the complete freedom of the individual is posited: voluntary transaction; no force on either side...'³ Other authors have taken up the point. André Gorz, for example, argues that employment is essentially depersonalising. The route to liberation is not so much via the abolition of paid work but 'to use the goods it supplies and the way in which they are produced to enlarge the sphere of autonomy'.⁴ Similarly, Peter Saunders has recently argued that consumption is 'that sphere of life which provides the greatest

potential for the expression of individual autonomy'.⁵

So 'consumption', or the exchange of money for goods, is seen by these authors as a realm of freedom. But, when we consider how these goods are used, there are substantial difficulties with these visions. For many people (and, in particular, for many women) the products which are bought can be seen as the basis for another kind of exploitation. The notion that consumption is a sphere of autonomy and freedom seems to overlook social relations, and especially the relations between genders. Some people, to put the matter crudely, get more freedoms than others. I will now elaborate on this.

Money and Time: the Uneven Development of Civil Society

Before exploring civil society and the ways in which forms of social reproduction, consumption and struggle are combining with each other, we can demonstrate some of its principal features in a descriptive way. There are two obvious ways to quantify the uneven nature of civil society. One is to examine how people spend their money and the other is to look at how they spend their time.

Table 4.1 shows household spending in different regions on commodities or services in the year 1984-85. It needs comparing with Table 4.2 showing the range of household incomes for the same regions.

In Chapters 1 and 3 we have discussed Britain's new spatial division of labour; headquarters and upper-level management tending to be concentrated in the South East while the 'peripheral' regions have especially high proportions of de-skilled manual workers, junior white collar staff and lower-level management. These tables are a graphic indication of the social results. Nearly 23 per cent of households in the South East were earning £350 or more a week in 1984-5, over double for all other regions except East Anglia. Particularly remarkable is the contrast between household incomes in the South East and those in the North, Yorkshire and Humberside and Northern Ireland. Nevertheless, it is again easy to forget the low-income households in Britain's South East. Eight per cent of households here earned under £50, only two per cent below the national average.

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 contain a number of other less obvious features. For example, the people in the regions with relatively low incomes and expenditures tend to allocate higher proportions of their spending on the more basic forms of consumption: fuel, light and power, food, clothing and footwear. The high proportion of spending on fuel, food and clothing in Northern Ireland is specially noticeable. Conversely, the regions with the higher-income people, such as the South East and the South West, tend to spend somewhat more on services.

Table 4.1 Household Expenditure on Commodities or Services as Percentage of Total Weekly Expenditure, 1984-5.

	Average per house- hold (£ per week)	Housing	Light fuel power	Food	Alco- holic drink	Tobacco	Clothing & footwear	Durable h/hold goods	Other goods	Transport, vehicles services & misc.
United Kingdom	157.5	16.3	6.2	20.4	4.8	2.8	7.3	7.4	7.8	27.1
North	131.8	14.0	6.8	22.4	6.1	3.8	8.2	7.0	7.5	24.2
Yorks H/side	142.9	15.4	6.5	20.7	5.2	2.9	7.4	7.0	7.3	27.6
East Mids.	155.5	17.1	5.9	20.3	4.8	2.9	6.7	7.6	7.9	26.8
East Anglia	149.5	17.3	7.0	20.7	4.1	2.4	6.6	7.0	8.2	26.7
South East	182.8	18.4	5.2	18.8	4.3	2.2	7.1	7.7	8.2	28.1
South West	158.5	16.6	6.6	19.8	4.2	2.3	6.6	7.5	8.2	28.2
West Mids.	149.1	16.6	6.4	21.0	5.0	2.8	7.0	7.3	7.3	26.6
North West	143.6	16.0	6.4	21.3	5.5	3.3	7.4	6.5	7.2	26.3
England	159.5	17.0	6.0	20.1	4.8	2.6	7.1	7.3	7.8	27.3
Wales	146.7	13.9	7.1	21.7	5.1	3.3	7.6	7.5	7.6	26.3
Scotland	150.2	12.0	6.6	21.6	5.6	3.8	8.3	8.0	7.6	26.5
North Ireland	147.3	11.3	9.6	24.2	3.4	3.4	9.7	4.6	7.3	26.5

Source: Regional Trends 22 (HMSO, 1987)

Table 4.2 Regional Distribution of Household Incomes, 1984-5.

	Average income (£ per week) per house- hold	Percentage of households in each income group							
		Weekly income of household, £							
		Under 50	50 but under 75	75 but under 100	100 but under 150	150 but under 200	200 but under 250	250 but under 350	350 or more
UK	206.8	10.6	10.6	8.2	13.2	13.5	11.9	17.3	14.6
North	170.4	14.6	13.6	9.3	14.1	12.4	14.2	13.0	8.8
Yorks/H.Side	179.1	13.4	12.6	9.7	12.9	14.5	11.4	15.6	9.9
E. Midlands	203.2	9.5	9.5	8.9	13.0	14.7	13.8	17.9	12.7
E. Anglia	204.8	10.9	11.7	9.6	11.9	13.6	12.9	14.8	14.6
S. East	248.0	8.0	7.9	6.4	12.3	12.0	11.3	19.4	22.7
S. West	208.8	7.2	11.3	7.3	13.3	16.0	11.9	19.7	13.2
W. Midlands	192.4	10.8	11.2	8.2	14.8	14.8	13.0	16.3	11.0
N. West	183.2	13.8	11.5	9.2	12.9	14.5	10.7	16.7	10.5
England	209.9	10.4	10.4	8.0	13.0	13.7	12.0	17.5	15.1
Wales	187.1	8.9	13.2	10.2	15.4	13.2	11.9	16.4	10.9
Scotland	198.3	13.3	10.7	8.3	13.1	11.8	12.2	16.9	13.7
N. Ireland	172.9	14.5	12.4	10.3	17.2	13.5	7.1	15.5	9.6

Source: Regional Trends 22 (HMSO, 1987)

There is also a tendency for the better-off regions to spend more on 'durable household goods', though on this kind of spending we find other regions such as the East Midlands and East Anglia allocating comparatively high proportions of their incomes. The category 'durable household goods' is, however, a very broad one. It contains a number of commodities such as refrigerators which could be classified as 'necessities'. A more detailed look at the category 'durable goods' shows, however, a more pronounced tendency for high-income regions to purchase certain kinds of consumer goods. For example, nearly a third of households in the South East own videos, leaving East Midlands and East Anglian households at a technologically-backward 20.5 per cent and 17.7 per cent. Deep freezers are perhaps the greatest 'luxury' item within 'durable household goods'. Some 70 per cent of households own them in the South East compared with, for example, 43 per cent in Northern Ireland and 51 per cent in Scotland. Inexplicably, the North West has the highest percentage of home computers.

A significant variation to the general theme of 'basic' goods taking up more of low-income regions' expenditure concerns housing. Given the tendency for the South East to have more than its fair share of high income households, it comes as no surprise that the total amounts spent on housing here are high. Perhaps surprising, however, is the proportion of incomes spent on housing in these apparently 'rich' regions; over 18 per cent in the South East compared with about 16 per cent in Britain as a whole and around 11 to 14 per cent in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

A key factor here, of course, is that owner-occupied housing is much more than a basic necessity. It is also a source of potentially major capital gains. So a household which can afford to invest nearly a fifth of its income in housing in the South East expects, in the long run, to be well-rewarded. And such a household, as we'll see shortly, can be expected to do its utmost to protect the capital gains available through owner-occupation. However, as we'll also be seeing later, a household in this area which cannot afford this proportion of its income for accommodation may well be in considerable difficulties.

Households' use of time has not so far been published on a regional basis, but preliminary studies of time use indicate that regional differences *per se* are less important than differences in how time is used by men and by women at different stages in the life-cycle and with different types of paid employment.⁶

Comparing a national picture of time-use in Britain with similar statistics for other countries begins to point up some of the important social divides which cannot be properly appreciated through the study of 'regional' differences or of simple cash transfers. During the 1970s a number of studies were carried out, showing how people used their time. Table 4.3

shows, for an area in Britain chosen as typical of the country as a whole, the use of time by men in paid work, women in paid work and women not in paid work. Incidentally, Reading, where this study was carried out, now forms part of the newly industrialised M4 corridor. As such it can no longer be considered 'typical.'

Table 4.3 Average Daily Hours Spent in Activities, Reading, 1973

Activity	Men in Paid Work (full and part time, age 16-70)	Women in Paid Work (full and part time, age 16-70)	Women not in Paid Work
Sleep	8.40	8.55	8.92
Work	4.29	3.60	0.06
Work Travel	0.45	0.01	0.00
Full-time Education	0.25	0.13	
Eating	1.51	1.37	1.52
Drinking (alcoholic)	0.27	0.13	0.05
Casual Social	1.09	1.13	1.48
Organised leisure	0.29	0.33	0.28
Private leisure	1.26	1.00	1.36
Television	2.25	1.67	2.33
Personal hygiene	0.68	0.77	0.62
Domestic work	0.88	2.92	4.62
Child care	0.11	0.16	0.81
Shopping	0.26	0.45	0.61
Travel	1.54	1.41	0.95
Miscellaneous	0.47	0.42	0.39
Total	24.00	24.00	24.00

Not all respondents engage in all activities.

Source: N. Bullock et al., 'Time budgets and models of urban activity patterns', *Social Trends* 5 (London: Central Statistical Office, HMSO 1974).

One of the clearest features of this table is the pressure of time on working women. The total time budget figure for domestic work and child care combined for those women who did not do paid work was 5.49 hours. For the women in paid work the same activities occupy 6.68 hours and for the men in paid work the total was 5.28 hours. In other words, working women typically have a double burden of household and paid work tasks,

one which has marked effects on their leisure time and their time spent on 'casual social' activities which include visiting friends and relatives.

At the same time as this British study of time use was completed, a massive international study of time budgets established just the same pressures on women in paid work. The authors of this study did their surveys in six East European countries, three West European countries, one Latin American country and 46 towns in America. One of their main conclusion was as follows:

The plight of the employed woman pervades all our time-budget records... Generally the cramped nature of her time is reflected by marked constrictions in all leisure activities, particularly those relatively passive and recuperative ones such as sitting down to pass time reading a newspaper... All told, then, the time-budget data form a rather compelling document suggesting that problems faced by the working woman have not been adequately solved in any of the countries surveyed, and substantial inequalities in the division of labour by sex remain everywhere.⁷

This international study summed up its findings by adding the time spent on paid work (including travel) to household tasks and expressing this sum as a percentage of a 24 hour day for women and men. The results (shown in Table 4.4) again indicate the extent to which women who combine paid and domestic work have, by comparison with men, their free time (especially during a 'day off') invaded by domestic work.

Table 4.4 Paid Work plus Domestic Work as Percentage of 24-hour Day in 11 Societies.

	Workday	Day Off
Employed Men	43	16
Employed Women	49	26
	Weekday	Sunday
'Housewives'	38	26

Source: P. Stone 'Child care in twelve countries' in A. Szalai (ed.) *The Use of Time* (The Hague: Mouton, 1972) p. 253.

How has the picture changed since the mid 1970s? The answer, at least for Britain, is not very much. A time budget study conducted at a national level between late 1983 and early 1984 concluded that if all forms of work (paid and unpaid) for women and men are added together the total amount

of work for each is much the same. However,

an exception is that women with part-time jobs work rather longer in total than their husbands... Part-time employed women are very likely to have children at home, and the disproportion between the spouses results from the 'dual burden' of paid work and childcare and child-related domestic work, carried out by the wife.⁸

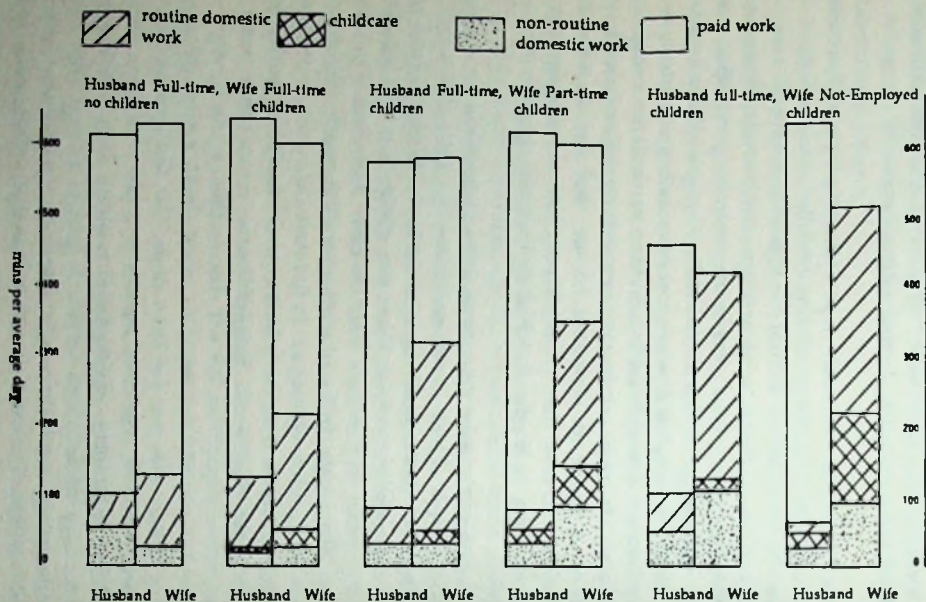
Indeed, since the number of women in part-time employment has continued to increase since the 1970s, the position as a whole has worsened.

Since the 1970s analysis of time budgets has turned away from individuals and towards the 'work strategies' of households as a whole. These studies have shown how work strategies undergo significant change according to the stage of the household's life-cycle. Early middle age (when the family is completed, when it needs maximum servicing and yet is making maximum demands for income) is a particularly crucial time for women. It is at this stage, as they take on extra paid work while still in demand back at home for domestic labour, that the 'dual burden' is heaviest. Before and after this, women's progressive disengagement from the formal economy is largely matched by their engagement in non-paid work at home.

Figure 4.1 shows the total amount of work undertaken by women and men. Within this, it shows the distribution of paid and unpaid work according to different kinds of engagement in the labour market (full or part-time) and whether or not there are children in the family. The pressures on women in part-time work are clear. Also clear is the extent to which men disengage from unpaid domestic work (their greatest involvement being when women are in full-time paid work and when there are children) and make their contribution to the family primarily through their income from paid work. This, of course, raises some major issues regarding gender inequalities. We will discuss these again shortly.

How does the use of time relate to social class? Again, the necessary research for Britain has not yet been done. The indications from other countries are, however, that class matters in a rather different way from gender. Within a country, employment position seems to affect particularly the *range* of activities in which groups engage; the better-off people undertaking a greater range of activity outside work than those with lower incomes. Table 4.5 shows, for example, the number of leisure activities undertaken by French and American men from different class backgrounds. The activities analysed were TV watching, newspaper-reading, radio, book-reading, studying, organisational activities, social life at home, social life outside home, active sports, other outdoor activities.

Figure 4.1 The Paid and Domestic Work of Couples



From J. Gershuny et al., "Time budgets: preliminary analyses of a national survey"
Quarterly Journal of Social Affairs 1986, 2(1) pp. 13-39

Table 4.5. Average number of Leisure Activities by Men in Six Cities in France and in Jackson (US) on Working Days

Social Groups	France	US
High, white-collar	4.07	3.04
Low, white-collar	3.17	2.98
Skilled workers	2.58	2.80
Unskilled workers	1.15	3.04

Source: 'Social differentiation in leisure activity choices: an unfinished experiment', in A. Szalai (ed.) *The Use of Time* (The Hague: Mouton, 1972).

The Social Relations of Civil Society

It is already clear that the apparently innocuous tables above showing how people use money and time contain some important processes and relationships. In the case, for example, of consumer spending and the reproduction of households these facts and figures contain struggles over housing tenure and households' ability (or otherwise) to purchase consumer goods. In the case of the time budgets, the figures describe, in a rather bland way, relations and conflicts between genders.

There is a real limit to the use of these facts and figures in terms of explaining what's going on. Continued emphasis on simply the regions of Britain, for example, could begin to suggest that the main explanations of local variations lie within the region itself, rather than the social divides which, to greater or lesser extents, are present in all regions. On this basis we could argue that regional differences are to be explained by (genetically?) inherited cultural differences. The following is, for example, one way in which we could explain differences in eating habits:

Northerners prefer things that make immediate sense; plain homely fare without suspicious sounding ingredients, fussy additions or fancy names... Northerners tended to turn up their noses at the more esoteric combinations – chicken and ham, sardine and anchovy and plumped, almost infallibly for 'no nonsense' tried and trusted flavours: ham, salmon, beef – or even plainly and simply 'meat'. The Northerner would prefer to feel that what he (sic) eats does him good. The South is the land of mixtures, of experimental mingling – jelly and blancmange together as a single dish, for example – and of subtler flavours: saltier bacon, more pungent types of cheese, more bitter marmalade.⁹

A similar kind of analysis was made in 1986 by Edwina Currie, a Junior Minister of Health. She got into severe trouble (not least from Northern

Tory supporters) for suggesting that higher incidences of ill-health in the North were a result of people there tending to eat chips. Chips are, as many people pointed out, eaten not simply through choice but because low incomes prohibit the kind of eating patterns which are supposedly inherent to those in 'the South'.

In other words, whether we are dealing with eating or any other form of 'regional' life-style we are firmly back not so much to regional differences *per se* but to the class and other social differences which constitute the differences between 'North' and 'South'. Furthermore, the socially important relationships and processes are not necessarily best appreciated by concentrating on the national (still less the international) scale. In the case of civil society we are to a greater extent dealing with processes of social change which take place at the scale of the community or the home, although in many instances these are combining with larger-scale demands such as those of multinational companies and their requirements for productive workforces. In the case of 'civil society' we are dealing with additional kinds of social division; whether, for example, people and households are dependent on state provision for items such as their homes and their health or whether they can afford various forms of private provision such as an owner-occupied house.

Towards a 'Horizontal' Civil Society?

In starting to think about contemporary civil society we need first to recall the different types of 'central' and 'peripheral' workers we outlined in Chapter 3. We need also to be considering their geographical distribution: the high concentration of managers and white collar workers in headquarters and research establishments in the South East contrasted with the large number of manual workers in South Wales and other peripheral regions.

How do these social and spatial changes connect with civil society? One useful way of considering contemporary civil society is that put forward by John Urry.¹⁰ He distinguishes between what he calls 'vertical' and 'horizontal' civil societies.

In 'vertical' civil societies social life outside employment is strongly influenced by the institutions and relations of employment itself. There have been a number of examples of such relationships in Britain. Many of the old industrial areas in Britain have, for example, seen labour movements and trade unions organise their own local civil society. Sheffield, for example, has long had one of the highest rates of council house building in Britain and this was directly attributable to the fact that a well-organised working class based in the steel industry ensured, through its trade union influence on the council, that large-scale municipal house building programmes were undertaken for its workers.¹¹ There are many other instances of working class organisations themselves making

their own civil society, although they do not necessarily result in major state intervention. Another example is in South Wales. Here the chapel, the workers' club and a range of educational institutions were amongst the organisations established by the workers themselves. A 'vertical' civil society does not necessarily have to be established by workers themselves. There have also been many instances of capital itself influencing the form of civil society. Perhaps the most dramatic examples were the company towns established in Britain during the nineteenth century. Here, employers attempted to organise the whole of their workers' civil society; their housing provision as well as their social life.

A 'horizontal' civil society, on the other hand, is one where civil society is less organised around the institutions of the workplace. Here civil society is organised around issues, struggles and relationships which are relatively separate from those of employment. We will shortly be encountering a number of such issues. They focus on, for example, questions of domestic property, gender relations in the home and environmental protection. In this case, then, there is a substantial disconnection between people's experience in civil society and their concerns in the realm of employment.

Urry uses this distinction between 'horizontal' and 'vertical' civil societies to make an argument. He suggests that contemporary civil society is becoming increasingly 'horizontal'; the class relations of employment becoming less influential in affecting the civil society and people's concerns and politics increasingly centring on issues outside paid work.¹²

The distinction between 'vertical' and 'horizontal' civil society is certainly a useful means of connecting up questions of employment or class with the rest of people's social lives. Nevertheless, the very broad distinction can be rather misleading. It is not at all clear, for example, that we can accurately talk about a civil society (including a small-scale civil society) being wholly 'vertical' and 'horizontal'. Presumably people in both kinds of relationship can be living alongside each other. Later we'll be meeting, for example, a Mass Observer in the West Country who makes frequent use of workers' clubs. He lives, however, in a town where, there are large numbers of people (including large numbers of retired people) who live in their own homes and whose lives outside work could be considered 'horizontal'. He also lives in the same household as a woman with a part-time job. Nevertheless, her civil society is primarily based on the home rather than work.

The idea that civil society is becoming steadily more horizontal could also be problematic. In the last chapter, for example, we considered new forms of working relationship in which workers' lives are being incorporated into the firm as one big 'family'. If these new forms of working relation are successfully transferred from Japan to Britain we could see a reversal of the movement towards 'horizontal' civil society

as companies increasingly ingratiate themselves not only into their employees' lives but also those of the employees' families.

For some elite categories of worker in Britain, such as the 'service class' which has recurred throughout this discussion, civil society is already quite 'vertical'. It's worthwhile remembering here some of the white collar career executives concentrated in the South East. The battery of fringe benefits (cars and private health insurance, for example) received by such workers means that their 'private' lives are firmly tied in to the company. More dramatic still are the managerial groups whose houses and school fees are also paid for by the company.¹³ A central objective here is to make these households more mobile, allowing them to move to different parts of Britain (and indeed to other parts of the world) to manage relatively immobile workforces. Nevertheless, these are very much an elite. Indeed, they are something of an exception amongst managerial groups in Britain. The current tendency now is for companies to restrict 'perks' of this kind. Company cars are clearly quite common but (as I'll also be arguing in Chapter 6) help with more substantial items such as housing costs is now something of an exception.

It seems premature to argue that civil society is becoming increasingly 'horizontal' or that the separation between employment-life and civil society is inevitable and irreversible. Nevertheless, even if there is a long-term tendency in this direction, the main point to note here is that there are distinctively different kinds of links between the class relations of paid work and forms of civil society, some links being more direct than others. The precise form such links take depends on other social relationships. Some workers (such as our high-flying executives) may be, in effect, carrying around with them invisible company towns in the form of subsidised housing and other substantial company benefits. For other workers, especially women in part-time employment, civil society may be almost entirely 'horizontal'. And, as I've said, these two workers might well be living together in the same family.

The most important priority for our purposes is not so much to define the form of civil society *per se* but to show three kinds of links. We are certainly concerned with how work-based class relations affect forms of civil society. But we are also concerned with how different elements of civil society combine in particular spatial contexts with one another. Finally, we are also concerned with how these combinations inform people's actions, including their political actions.

I now turn to some of the more general relationships which combine with one another and with paid employment to constitute civil society. My procedure here for each aspect of civil society is to discuss first some of the broader patterns of social change which to a large extent are affecting most localities. However, given our special interest in combinations in localities and their effects on politics, we must quite quickly become

involved in the more specific details of how these different elements of civil society are linking with one another. How this intermeshing occurs and how it in turn affects people's politics is a question to which I return at the end of the chapter and discuss in a more systematic way in Chapter 5.

House Tenure, Class and Capital Gains

The home is a key element of civil society. It is here where people are raised and where an adequately fit and educated workforce must be reproduced. It is also here that most of our accumulated goods are assembled. Nevertheless, it is a site of considerable struggle and contest; between, for example, men and women or between those who want to protect the value of their house against what they see as threats by newcomers. The gender question is one I will return to shortly. Here I want to give special attention to tenure.

One of the main and growing social divisions in contemporary Britain is between those who own domestic property and those who don't. I'm particularly thinking here of the division between those who own or who are buying the home in which they live and those who live in public sector housing. But there are also some big divisions even between those who do own their own homes. Here I want to illustrate in more detail how relationships other than those of property (especially those stemming from people's position in paid work) combine with property relations to affect their well-being and, ultimately, their politics.

House Tenure: the Main Social Division?

It has been suggested recently that home ownership has, along with other forms of privatised consumption such as health care, now come to be a more significant social division in Britain than the relationships formed in paid work. For example, Peter Saunders has argued that:

the social and and economic divisions arising out of the ownership of key means of consumption such as housing are now coming to represent a major fault line in British society (and perhaps others too), that privatization of welfare provisions is intensifying this cleavage to the point where sectoral alignments in regard to consumption may come to outweigh class alignments in respect of production, and that housing tenure remains the most important single aspect of such alignments because of the accumulative potential of house ownership and the significance of private housing as an expression of personal identity and as a source of ontological security.¹⁴

'Ontological security' refers here to a person's 'beingness'; literally a sense of place in the world which helps to give meaning and security to her or his life.¹⁵ We will return to this shortly. Certainly there is, in general

terms, a growing polarisation between the the two main housing tenures in Britain. For those in owner-occupation home ownership is a potentially major economic asset. It has been estimated, for example, that the real rate of return on their investment since the 1960s for owners remaining in the same house has been 11.7 per cent. More recently, the rate of return between 1971 and 1986 for those receiving full mortgage tax relief has been estimated at 15.7 per cent.¹⁶

It is also clear that there is now a great deal of wealth tied up in domestic property. Roughly one quarter of all owner-occupiers and two thirds of those over aged 60 were outright owners of their homes in 1983. Although up-to-date and accurate figures are difficult to obtain, the implications are that a growing number of households are now possessors of a major asset which they can realise for themselves or pass on to their families.

These divisions have been encouraged and exacerbated by recent national government policies, the outlines of which were clear before the first Thatcher government. The rate of public-sector housebuilding has particularly suffered from the more general squeeze on state spending, the proportion of government spending on public housing falling from ten per cent to three per cent between 1974/75 and 1984/5. Under 50,000 public sector dwellings are now constructed a year compared with about 160,000 between 1975 and 1977. Council-house sales under the 1980 Housing Act have also exacerbated the division, over 600,000 dwellings were sold between 1980 and 1984 at a total discount to purchasers of over £3 billion. These sales have been socially and spatially divisive. The highest rate of sales have been in the more 'desirable' areas, the effect being to emphasise the differences in housing tenure between the Britain's Northern and Southern regions and between the inner cities and the suburbs.¹⁷

The determined assault on local government finance has further exacerbated the situation. Local authorities have not only been restricted in borrowing money for new building but have not been allowed to use over 10 per cent of the proceeds of their council house sales for new construction or the repair of old dwellings.

One result has been a growing association in Britain between those who are marginalised in the job market and those are marginalised in relation to housing tenure. The important factor here has been the general rise of incomes combined with the steady penetration of capital into speculative housing and land development. The period between the 1960s and the present day has been especially critical, an increasing proportion of working class families during this time being able (so long as they retain a stable income) to afford an owner-occupied home. Furthermore, this house has almost always provided a safe investment, even if such 'private' investment has in fact been actively supported by substantial government

mortgage subsidies.

The other side to this coin has been the steady relegation of council property to a 'residual' category, in effect providing for those who cannot afford owner-occupation. This is, however, a spatially uneven process. In some cities and regions (examples are Sheffield and parts of the West Midlands) some council estates still retain a relatively high social status.

Many of the earlier municipal house building programmes (especially those of the 1920s and 1940s) catered for the families of the skilled artisans and 'respectable' working class. One 1920s council property in Brighton originally contained a civil servant who worked in 10 Downing Street! Now, however, over half the unemployed heads of household and two thirds of the long-term unemployed are in the public sector tenure. Single parents (especially women) are also over-represented in this tenure as are certain categories of black people. A recent national comparison of black and white people's housing showed, for example, that white owner-occupiers outnumber council tenants by two to one and the percentage of West Indian families in council housing (46 per cent) was more than that in owner occupation (41 per cent). To make matters even worse, black people tend to be allocated the worst standards of council housing.¹⁸ The percentage of Asians (72 per cent) in owner occupation, by contrast, is high. However, the standard of their housing conditions is generally lower than that of white households and their borrowing costs are higher. This is a result of the fact that the areas they live in, combined with their generally low incomes, are seen as 'problems' by the main lending institutions.

Tenure and its Combination with Labour Markets

It is too simple, however, to argue that social divisions such as those over housing and other general processes affecting the home are becoming generally more significant in terms of households' well-being than the class divisions formed at the workplace. Indeed, some of the examples I have just given of racial minorities in owner-occupation demonstrate the problems of such an assertion. Such an argument is particularly inadequate, as I will show in the next chapter, if we want to understand people's actions and their political alignments. More important than considering housing tenure as an independent source of economic power and social well-being is its *combination* in particular circumstances with the range of other relationships and processes affecting households' lives. These particularly include positions on the job market and domestic relations within the household. Again, it is locality which is especially important here since these combinations, either worsening or improving a household's circumstances, can only be adequately understood in their spatial contexts.

Ray Pahl's recent study of households on the Isle of Sheppey shows

some of the ways in which these combinations can operate, with public and private sector housing being amongst the major elements in determining how the 'rich' get richer and the poor poorer.¹⁹ He describes two households in detail. A household that is 'central' in terms of employment (a stevedore and his wife) are sufficiently well-off to improve their situation by buying a house, putting in a great deal of time and money into improving it, and as a result have a considerable financial asset which they can later trade up for another home and eventually hand on to their children. Even this, however, would depend on the house being located in a neighbourhood where property values appreciate. While attempting to ensure their permanence in employment they must also be ensuring that they are in an area which is optimally placed for house price inflation. Pahl contrasts this household with another in which an unemployed docker becomes the main housewife (aided by an older daughter) whilst the wife becomes a full-time worker in an old people's home. Not only is this second household poor on the basis of their income from employment, but their circumstances are being even further exacerbated by the fact that they will never make capital gains out of their house.

These are just two households. A broader indication of how combinations of employment and forms of tenure can work out in practice comes from the growing rate of mortgage defaults, especially amongst those households whose incomes leave them on the fringes of owner-occupation. For example, between 1983 and 1985 there was a 36 per cent rise in defaults on local authority mortgages on 'right to buy' sales of council houses in 68 Metropolitan Districts. Similarly, building society statistics show that since 1979 the numbers of owner occupying households who are in six to twelve months arrears has quadrupled to around 40,000. For these households owner occupation has become not so much 'ontological security' but a nightmare. The reason most often cited reason for mortgage arrears are unemployment and family break-up.²⁰

So amongst the most critical connections here are again those between housing markets, labour markets and households' position in paid work. As well as questions of political alignments there are also important strategy issues here which I will discuss in the final chapter. Meanwhile, we can further illustrate some of the issues and key contests in civil society by going to London and some of the regions mentioned in the last chapter.

Tenure, Labour Markets and Housing Struggle: 'Affluent' and 'Peripheral' Regions

There are a number of localities in which we can see very clearly the new kinds of social polarisation which emerge as service class households move into areas containing large numbers of lower-income groups. Amongst the best-known areas in Britain are those inner London boroughs in which

small, high-income households are moving into the older housing stock and sub-dividing this accommodation to meet their requirements. The result is, of course, a rapid escalation in property values. And this, combined with cut-backs in the building of public sector housing, puts low income families (especially those just setting up their home) at a great disadvantage. Highly paid and highly visible 'yuppies' working for the post Big Bang financial services sector are often blamed for this process. This is, however, a vast over-simplification. The percentage of people working in financial services is certainly high in London, but a relatively small group such as those working in the City could not have such dramatic and large-scale effects. We should remember here Map 1.5 showing that London is the centre for company headquarters of all kinds. This is therefore a concentrated centre of high-level managers in all kinds of enterprise; one indicator being that over 14 per cent of the population here have a 'degree or equivalent' compared to 8.2 per cent for Britain as a whole.

Also significant may be the actual form of households in the London region; house-prices having, it seems, a formative effect on people's marital behaviour. In London, 60 per cent of male marriages and 41 per cent of female marriages are amongst the over 25s, compared with 48 per cent and 34 per cent nationally. Adults are, it seems, delaying getting married until they can afford to buy a house. Until then, income earners are presumably either living together (and, in the process, again forcing up house prices) or continuing to live in their parents' homes.

There are other, less well-known but perhaps more typical, examples of such tensions and polarisations.²¹ One such is Berkshire. Here is an area of rapid growth, but an area which is throwing up a series of social conflicts not only between different tenures but between different sectors of employment. As I have suggested earlier, such conflicts within a supposedly 'affluent' region can become all too easily ignored in debates about the 'affluent South' and 'the North.' There are also some important implications here in terms of the politics emerging from the area.

The new jobs here are mainly in electronics and services, these supplanting the old industries such as the 'beer, bulbs and biscuits' of the Reading economy. Change in employment has therefore consisted of a huge influx of managers and other white-collar service class workers, some being the mobile elite 'vertically organised' into their company. The new senior white collar workers are the attraction for the house-building companies. Berkshire County Council has shown that two thirds of the new houses are being bought by households whose main earners are managers and professionals. Unsurprisingly, house prices here are very high; in 1984 averaged £49,000, 59 per cent above the national average of £31,000. Such high house prices are not simply the result of high incomes. They are also a testament to the ways in which some companies look after

their key executives. But, perhaps even more important, these high values are a product of the ways (including, as we'll be seeing shortly, actively endorsing the rural conservation cause) in which those households already in this area protect their property values.

And, in doing so, these high-income households again ensure that for many low-income households (including many manual workers) this is by no means a 'boom area'. The level of unemployment here is in fact only just below that for Britain as a whole, a third of the total being long-term unemployed. Groups such as single people, young households and single parent families are distinctly missing out in this area of apparent success. One indication of the difficulties here is that only 34.6 per cent of borrowers from the Nationwide Building Society are first time buyers in Berkshire compared to 42.1 per cent nationally. Black people are under particular pressure. For example, ethnic minorities make up only 21 per cent of Slough's workforce but half of the applicants to local job centres. Of these only 5 per cent get jobs.

Clearly, many of these low-income individuals and households are also under increasing pressure as sales of council houses proceed. There are, however, areas of resistance. One such is Slough where, despite the closure of heavy industry, there is still a large working class population which supports the Labour Party. Despite losing control in the 1983 general election (and not regaining it in 1987) Labour has retained control of the Borough and introduced an extensive house modernisation programme to start coping with a waiting list of 2,500 households. Whilst they have built 200 new units a year, they remain hamstrung by government regulations. The £20 million they have accumulated from council house sales cannot be used for new construction. So even in this 'red island' marginal groups are not finding sufficient decent accommodation.

An obvious solution for such groups is to move to where the cost of housing is less exorbitant. The question here, of course, is where do they move to? Which area outside the South East is offering the jobs? Which area is offering jobs to households which need two income-earners? Many of these households are therefore immobilised in an 'affluent' area from which they would like to extricate themselves. Again, those in already superior class positions reinforce their superiority when it comes to housing.

So the new kind of polarisation in the local labour market is partly reflected in the local housing market. But a reverse process is now also taking place; the high house prices having an effect on investment for employment. In recent years one of the biggest problems for local employers in the area has been to attract skilled manual workers. For this group (living in, say, the Midlands or the North East) Berkshire's house prices make moving virtually impossible; leaving them, like other manual workers, stranded outside the South East. Hence, ironically, calls can now

be heard from members of the East Berkshire and South Buckinghamshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry (the fifth largest in the country and amongst the Tories' keenest and most natural supporters) for the Conservatives to allow local councils to use its council house sales funds to build more cheap accommodation. In 1985 nearly a quarter of large firms in Berkshire (mainly manufacturers) were citing high house prices as one of their major problems behind their labour shortage, one result being that the housebuilders have started to use these facts to persuade central government to make more building land available. For some incoming multinationals the high house prices are so exorbitant that they have gone elsewhere. One example is National Semiconductors. Their Vice President, Pauline Hamill, explained their move to Swindon rather than Berkshire:

We looked at Bracknell and Milton Keynes. We would have liked to be nearer Heathrow Airport than we are but Swindon won in the end because of the area's house prices. We consulted the staff who had to be relocated both from Munich and from our factory in Scotland and they preferred Wiltshire.²²

So for some potential incomers the very 'success' of the region is, due to escalating house prices, proving a disincentive for investment.

South Wales and Central Scotland are examples of yet other relationships between labour and housing markets.²³ Working-class households in both these areas, like those in Berkshire, may be relatively stuck. But their housing problems stem not so much from unsuccessfully competing for new and expensive accommodation but from the fact that the nationally-based housing companies are reluctant to invest here in the first place.

South Wales is an area which has seen dramatic changes to its industrial base. These have been away from the heavy industries of steel and coal, towards the service sector and the low-status production end of 'hi-tec'. The result is, again, a local social polarisation which is reflected in, and exacerbated by, local housing markets. The housebuilders (especially the volume builders) are catering mainly for the better-off middle class workers employed mainly on the coastal plain. The builders are, however, fighting shy of providing housing in other areas, such as the Valleys, of high unemployment or 'low demand'. At the same time, the presence of a relatively cheap, inexperienced (or 'green') female labour forces continues to attract the large multinational companies to the region. Central Scotland, another area in which the old manufacturing industries have declined and where the new kinds of production in electronics have thrived, has some similarities with South Wales. At the same time, however, both Glasgow and Edinburgh have recently been developing as

major service centres, further polarising the population and its demand for housing. In this sense they come close to the problems surrounding the Berkshire 'success area'.

These combinations of labour and housing markets are closely linked to political demands and local housing and economic strategies. They provide yet more examples of how forms of class relations in a locality combine with aspects of civil society to give rise to particular kinds of politics. In the case of South Wales demands for public sector intervention mainly focus on demands in the realm of production. Coal and steel are, of course, state-run industries and for many years here there has been a 'labourist' political tradition which emphasises intervention to deal with the local economy rather than to deal with local civil society. As I have mentioned, the latter has long been associated, in a 'vertical' way, with trade unions and community organisations rather than with state intervention. Similarly, levels of owner-occupation have been high here for over a century.

The labour movement in Central Scotland, on the other hand, has consistently been to the fore in demanding and building housing financed by central government. A key episode here was the famous 1915 Glasgow rent strike in which armaments workers refused to pay extortionate rents to their landlords and threatened to go on strike unless central government intervened with a publicly-funded housing programme. These workers' demands were successful and ever since the First World War rates of council housing here have been high compared with the rest of Britain. This is another instance of how a vertically organised group (in this case a strategic and well-organised section of the working class) has in the past been able to shape a local civil society. It remains to be seen, however, whether traditions of this kind can continue to help a working class which is now much less strategic and more vulnerable.

Struggles in Contemporary Civil Society: some Service Class Households in an 'Affluent' Region

The problems and politics of households restricted to the peripheral and less affluent regions can be usefully contrasted with the situation of some of the more affluent and rather more mobile service class people who we met earlier in the 'Silicon Valley' area of Berkshire. Civil society, as I have outlined, is composed of struggles and contests outside the realm of paid work. Amongst the most enthusiastic joiners and leaders of these struggles are relatively affluent households hoping to further improve their situation. Again, if Urry is right, struggles of this 'horizontal' kind can be expected to become more frequent. An increasing number of households owning their own homes combined with a labour force which is becoming more part-time and feminised may well imply that more households see contests outside the workplace as more 'winnable' and

relevant to their needs. Again, locality (and the protection of locality) is of central importance.

The lengths to which some owner-occupiers in Berkshire will go to protect their neighbourhood and their house prices is a good illustration here. There is something rather odd about conservationist appeals to preserving 'rural England' in this 'hi-tec' corner of the the country. The paradox is intensified when, as we will discuss in Chapter 6, we remember that this stretch of affluent rurality is highly dependent on central government defence spending. It is the familiar story of those households pulling up the drawbridge (almost literally in the case of some of the neo-Elizabethan houses in the area) on invasions by future residents and possible decline of house prices. The result has been an interesting set of conflicts between groups who might all be expected to be Tory supporters. In fact, this is another example of 'the politics of locality' with, in this instance, a potential for changing political alignments.

In the early 1980s Michael Heseltine, then Secretary of State for the Environment, overruled and modified the Central Berkshire Structure Plan, making land available for an extra 8,000 houses; dubbed by the locals as 'Heseltown'. This in turn has led to sustained and vocal opposition, led by the local Tory MPs who, in attempting to resist these unwelcome incursions and developments, found a new concern with the plight of Britain's cities and depressed regions. In early 1985 they were urging a later Secretary of State, Patrick Jenkin:

to reconsider the provision of land for housing in the South East to take account of the need to give a boost to economic activity in the regions, especially the North and the Midlands, to increase the use of land lying waste in the conurbations, especially the inner cities, and to reduce the pressure for development on green field sites in the South East, where intensive development is not welcome.²⁴

The MPs were reflecting the demands of those owner occupiers in the area who were trying to lead a quiet life in the hamlets of Warfield, Binfield and Winkfield Row. Writers on environmental conservation groups have established that they are almost invariably formed and run by 'middle' and 'upper-middle' class groups, with the working class giving passive support. This is also the case in this hi-tec arcadia, these affluent groups not seeing themselves as what they called 'just another anonymous suburb in the silicon corridor stretching Westward from London'.²⁵ And the villagers made some famous allies, including rock star Paul McCartney and TV naturalist David Bellamy. The latter even brought a group of ontologically insecure badgers into the anti-growth coalition, arguing that their homes were also under threat by the housebuilders.

Against these groups, however, was (and still is) ranged another

powerful set of allies: local farmers and the house builders. The farmers had obvious economic reasons for supporting the construction of houses on their land. During 1983 it was reported that 'the farmers and the landowners can hardly wait [for development]. Some 52 have already written to the County Council to offer land.²⁶ More recently some farming brothers in the area who were previously Reading's main milk suppliers have formed themselves into a consortium to develop a £150 million science park.

The house builders (many of which are just parts of nationally and internationally-based conglomerates with interests other than housing) are now seeing Berkshire and other areas of protected 'green belt' land as especially promising areas for profit taking. Up-market houses (the new half-timbered Elizabethan mansions have double garages for the executives working in this hi-tec utopia) remain in demand and it is this type of accommodation (rather than, say, low-cost starter homes) which the house construction industry is most anxious to construct. Bill Blincoe (the national coordinator of a conglomerate of three nationally-based house builders) explained why housebuilding had to continue. It was in the national interest:

There has to be new housebuilding in the South East... It is the only area where there is enough economic activity to sustain it. History has shown that it is no good turning away growth from where it naturally happens. If it doesn't happen here it will probably go to Europe.²⁷

Combining with the farmers, landowners and builders are some other powerful groups, including some of the local employers. Again, the high cost of housing which is partly attributable to conservationist land policies is one factor underlying their inability to attract key skills into the area.

This, then, is a rather extreme example (though one which is broadly familiar in many parts of Britain) of the politics of locality. Here are 'horizontal' struggles in civil society combining with the demands of a range of industrial interests (farmers and housebuilders as well as employers in services and other areas of manufacturing) for better profits.

The outcome of the struggle remains as yet unclear. At the time of writing a Tory central government committed to the encouragement of market forces is finding to its discomfort that some of its key supporters remain distinctly unenthusiastic about the way market forces are affecting them. The immediate signs are of some kind of compromise. The residents around Bracknell, for example, have succeeded in reducing their part of Heseltown from 4,000 to 1,500 dwellings. An indication of central government's increasing sensitivity to the electorate over this issue came in late 1985 from Kenneth Baker, the then recently-appointed Environment

Secretary. He was now endorsing state intervention for the area in the form of more restrictive land use planning. 'People tell me to call a halt to it, especially in the South East, and neither central or local government can ignore the groundswell of opinion against the scale of developments of the recent past.'²⁸

Nevertheless, these conflicts and divisions within what seems like a Conservative Party heartland are significant in terms of their potential implications for party politics. There are some signs here that the conservation issue led some erstwhile Tory supporters to shift their allegiances away from the Conservatives and towards the Alliance. The Alliance performed well in Berkshire in the 1983 and 1987 general elections. And in some parts of Berkshire where Tories remain keen to attract further economic growth there are continuing indications of rising support for the centre parties amongst disaffected owner-occupiers. An example is Newbury where, despite national-level setbacks, the Liberals and SDP have a strong base of support. This raises some general issues not only about these parties but, more importantly, about the factors causing changes in households' political alignments. We will return to these later.

Services, Self-servicing, Gender and Locality

I want now to turn to home life; more specifically the changing social relations in the home. Clearly, the domestic work that households do with the equipment they buy is a central way in which society is reproduced and changed. There are, however, a number of major social developments taking place here. The main one I shall discuss is the trend towards 'self-servicing' in the home. First, however, I will be putting this in the context of the growth of employment in services. Furthermore, in turning to the home, we are turning to a central and highly complex sphere of struggle: that between genders.

The time budget studies we have already examined started to show that there are important issues of gender relations involved when we come to look at work in the form of unpaid domestic labour. It is above all women who do this kind of work, often combining it with a low paid 'service' job. So, in much the same way as the dominant classes in employment tend to affect people's house prices, the dominant gender in employment tends to further dominate when it comes to divisions between who does the paid work and who does the unpaid domestic work. Nevertheless, as I'll be indicating with the two Mass Observers at the end of this chapter, these divisions of labour are the subject of continuing contest. They affect women's political alignments and their demands for change differently according to the ways in which they combine with other pressures and demands.

Table 4.6 'Basic' compared with 'Service' Industry Employment: 1971, 1984

	Per cent of total in employment in Britain	
	1971	1984
'Basic' industries		
Agriculture	1.9	1.6
Energy/water supply	3.6	3.0
Minerals extraction	5.8	3.8
Metal goods, engineering & vehicle industries	16.7	12.3
Other manufacturing	14.0	10.9
Construction	5.5	4.6
Total	47.5	35.3
'Service' industries		
Distribution, hotels, catering & repairs	16.6	20.4
Transport & communications	7.0	6.1
Banking, finance, Leasing & business services	6.0	8.9
Other services	22.8	29.2
Total	52.4	64.6

Source: *Social Trends* 1986 (London: HMSO)

About 20 years ago there was much talk (at least amongst relatively affluent academics) of the coming 'post-industrial society'. The argument was that new industrial technologies and much-improved productivity were heralding a new society of mass affluence. Our basic needs would soon be catered for by a capital-intensive and thriving industrial base. The problems for most people were seen no longer as those of basic subsistence but of agonising choices between a huge range of services and alternative life styles. A few poorer people would be left, but their needs would be catered for by a burgeoning system of welfare, all funded out of a profitable industrial economy. Daniel Bell described his version of this post-industrial arcadia as follows:

A post industrial society is based on services... If an industrial society is defined by the quantity of goods as marking a standard of living, a post

industrial society is defined by the quality of life as measured by the services – health, education, recreation and the arts – which are now deemed desirable and possible for everyone.²⁹

At first sight it seems Bell's optimistic view has come to pass. As Table 4.6 shows, the percentage of people in the 'basic' industries has in general fallen, whilst that in 'services' has indeed risen. People, it seems, are now being adequately 'serviced'.

Table 4.7. The Lowest Paid Jobs

	Average gross weekly earnings excl. overtime & shift pay
Men	
Farming, fishing & related	101.60
Bakers, confectioners	103.60
Catering, cleaning & other services (including hospital porters, chefs, barmen, road sweepers)	103.20
Railway trackmen	105.80
Butchers, meat cutters	107.20
General labourers	107.30
Storekeepers/porters	107.65
Goods drivers	108.60
Moulding machinists	111.70
Women	
Hairdressers	67.40
Shop check-out assistants	76.70
Shop assistants/shelf fillers	78.60
Sewing machinists	80.60
Catering, cleaning & other services (including kitchen staff, cleaners, waitresses, barmaids)	82.20
Receptionists	82.70
Nursing auxiliaries/assistants	84.20
Footwear workers	86.70
Packers, bottlers, canners	88.10
Storekeepers	88.80

Source: Low Pay Unit, *Low Pay Review*, Winter 1984

However, for a number of reasons, this would be an over-hasty conclusion; and not simply for the obvious reason that manufacturing output has dramatically declined (by ten per cent between 1978 and 1984) or that

levels of welfare-provision have not remorselessly risen. First, we need to be cautious about what is categorised as 'services'. What does 'services' actually mean? Elements of what are listed as 'services' could well be re-categorised as parts of industry; parts of transport and communications, for example, or parts of 'banking, finance, insurance, business services and leasing'. Bearing in mind our observation in Chapter 3 that companies are increasingly subcontracting specialist services to separate firms, the apparent growth of services at the expense of manufacturing is, at least in part, a function of the ways statisticians categorise groups of people.³⁰

A second reason why we should not get over-excited by the new service society is that it tends to be staffed by relatively cheap workers, especially young people and women working part-time.

Unaccountably, the Department of Employment classifies some of the worst paid forms of personal services in a category which includes film and TV production and distribution, thus concealing the position of some of the worst-paid services workers. This can be partially overcome by figures from the Low Pay Unit showing the extent to which low pay is concentrated in the service sector, along with other jobs such as garment and textile manufacturing and the lower grades of the public sector. Table 4.7 shows the ten jobs with the lowest average basic earnings by men and women in 1984. One thing that is immediately clear is not only the extent to which personal services are represented here but the extent to which the lowest paid jobs are those of women.

There may be, in Mrs Thatcher's words 'a great industry in other people's pleasure', but many of those actually involved in the industry might not see it that way.

Table 4.8

Ratio of the percentage of women in services to percentage of women in industry (excluding agriculture)

Germany	1.95
France	2.64
Italy	1.51
Netherlands	4.72
Belgium	2.59
Luxembourg	5.66
United Kingdom	2.62
Ireland	2.59
Denmark	4.49
'The Nine'	2.30

Source: Commission of the European Communities *The European Community and Work for Women* (Brussels, 1979)

Another indication of the extent to which 'services' (a category which, as we have seen, we need to treat with some caution) depends on women's labour comes in table 4.8. The most recent comparative figures available date from 1975. In most European countries services are highly dependent on female work and in all these countries wages for women are on average lower than those of men. Although Britain's employment of women in the services sector is rather over average, the 'feminisation' of these emergent sectors of employment appears to be taking place in most advanced capitalist societies.

The Production of Services by Households

A third reason why the conventional division between manufacturing and 'services' is inadequate brings us back to the home. A mistake which many of us continue to make is that 'basic industry' is somehow catering for people's 'basic needs', whilst services are items we can afford as and when industry leaves us sufficiently affluent to start visiting MacDonaldis and leisure parks. This is wrong because industry (including, of course, the electronics and car industries we've looked at earlier) is in fact providing a whole range of commodities which we can buy to provide our own services. These, then, are services which are provided by households for themselves and not services which are bought by some people from others.

Over the past 30 years or so there has been what Gershuny calls a 'familiar revolution' in the way services have been provided.³¹ This takes the form of not so much people providing consumer-services for others (although this has indeed increased) but people providing their own services in their own homes. Watching TVs or videos rather than going to the cinema, fixing up a gutter bought from Texas Homecare rather than getting a 'man in'. Washing clothes in a machine rather than in a laundry. These are parts of the 'familiar revolution' in which we are all participating, but which the statistics dividing up 'basic' and 'service' industries again fail to recognise.

Why has this kind of home-based self-servicing happened? We could perhaps argue (in line with the rather optimistic visions of civil society which I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter) that the kinds of freedoms represented by self-servicing are attractive to people. This may well be part of the reason. More tangibly, however, there are some very powerful economic and social processes making them happen, many of which we have touched on earlier. On the one hand, increasing capital investment and technological innovation in industrial production have dramatically reduced the costs of items for self-provisioning. By contrast, the costs of providing services remains relatively high, largely as a result of their being very labour-intensive. Between the mid 1950s and the late 1970s the costs of services in the form of personal services rose twice as fast as the cost of consumer goods. No wonder people are tending to service

themselves rather than employ other people or go 'out' for their entertainment.

The social relations of household services

The costs and labour intensiveness of personal services and the increasing penetration of consumer goods and services into the home are important for our purposes since they again point to the home as both a crucial point of production and of reproduction; in effect, a mini-factory not only reproducing people sufficiently refreshed, well-fed and trained to go to work, but providing a set of resources which are used for 'informal' or unpaid work with which people can service themselves.

Civil society, as I have said, can be seen as the realm of market freedoms and self-determination. Even if a multinational is selling us, say, DIY materials or kitchen equipment, it is not telling us how to use them. As I've also mentioned, there are however, snags about these 'freedoms'. Before we present an optimistic view of de-industrialising but self-servicing households and regions, we again need to see how they combine in households and localities. Once we do this we begin to find that these changes in the home are benefitting some people more than others. First, it is again those households that are *already* well-off, those who have the time and economic resources to buy and make use of all this self-servicing equipment, who are benefiting most. Similarly, it tends to be those who own their own homes who are going to benefit most from all this informal work. Again, the service class is at a particular advantage in this respect. At the same time, this is the first way in which people and households which have been marginalised in paid work and who are not easily able to move elsewhere can be made even more marginal in this sphere of market 'freedoms'.

This is one of the most important implications of the study I mentioned earlier by Ray Pahl of households on the Isle of Sheppey.³² Unemployment there stood at around 20 per cent in the early 1980s when he was conducting his survey. The old, male-dominated, industries and job-opportunities (including a steel plant and an Admiralty dockyard) were tottering or had been completely closed. The new, mainly multinational, firms which have come to the island were attracted not so much by the unemployed men as by the supply of relatively cheap, and apparently passive, female labour.

The picture has many similarities with blackspots of unemployment and industrial change elsewhere; though perhaps one of Sheppey's features not shared everywhere is its relatively deferential and conservative male labour force. This does contrast with some of the more militant heartlands of unionisation and the labour movement in areas such as South Wales, South Yorkshire and Merseyside.

Despite this difference, however, some of the emergent inequalities

which Pahl found on the Isle of Sheppey seem extendable to the other places. On the Isle of Sheppey the great mass of home-maintenance, improvement and renovation was being done less by those who, as a result of unemployment or part-time work, had most time to spare. Rather, it was being done by the richer and already well-off households; those who were sufficiently well off to afford the equipment and (perhaps surprisingly) those who had children.

So it tended to be the busier and better-off households (containing two or more wage earners) who, whilst geographically immobile, were nevertheless making themselves even busier with self-servicing. Most of them were owner-occupiers too. So through their DIY efforts they could here on the Isle of Sheppey make themselves richer still, a result of house prices here (and this would not necessarily be the case in depressed regions elsewhere) consistently outstripping inflation. On top of this, the better-off households had much greater choice over *how* they spent their resources. Some were going in for extensive home food-production, others were helping other households (such as single parent families) which were much more dependent on communal assistance whilst some were even building their own homes.

But in pointing to these differences between households, we are again raising what many people (in particular many women) would consider an even more important division within civil society; a division which incorporates perhaps the biggest struggle of all. Who is doing all this self-servicing?

Gender, Class, Domestic Work and Locality

Civil society (in which labour forces are reproduced) is of course crucially dependent on unpaid domestic labour. Back in the early 1860s Karl Marx predicted a late form of capitalist society in which capital had permeated the whole of work; not only the industrial production of commodities for sale but the kind of work which people do in the homes. In this advanced stage of capitalism: 'capital has conquered the whole of production and therefore the home and petty form of industry intended for self consumption disappears'.³³

If he was still alive Marx would probably not be too surprised to find capital 'conquering' domestic production in the form of fridges, home laundries and computers. But he might be surprised at the persistence of a particular kind of labour: unpaid domestic work performed by both women and men.

On the other hand Engels, Marx's co-worker, might have been less startled by the continuation of domestic labour, even though he might have been surprised that it is still women who are still doing the greater part of it. In his book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, written in 1884, he mentions the fact that women were then being

increasingly employed by industry. This, he argued, signalled the beginnings of women's emancipation. Their oppression, he argued, stemmed from the fact that men were the chief wage earners. As such, they were in effect able to treat women as a kind of private industrial proletariat in the home. On the other hand, if women were extensively employed in industrial production, men's domination of women would be seriously undermined.³⁴ As we've seen, however, the extensive employment of women can hardly be said to have heralded a new era of female freedom in the home. Indeed, in some respects the divisions between 'men's' and 'women's' jobs in employment have strengthened men's social positions.

In raising the issue of domestic labour we are touching on some immense issues; issues which have been widely debated by radical feminists, Marxist feminists and others.³⁵ Some authors (building particularly on Marx's and Engels' work which emphasised industrial production as the principal motor of all forms of social change) argue that men's domination of women should be seen as stemming primarily from relations in the realm of employment. According to this argument men's domination still originates from the fact that women are at best given marginalised jobs and, as a result of their low economic status, remain trapped in the 'private' realm of the home. Men's power, meanwhile, remains dominant in the 'public' realm of paid employment.

Clearly, employment relations are a major factor underlying men's relationship to women. At the same time, however, such an explanation seems too narrow. It does not sufficiently reflect the many and diverse forms that gender relations and patriarchy take. It also suggests, in a way which many feminists would contest, that a programme of liberation would be based mainly in the sphere of employment.

More persuasive is the view put forward by, amongst others, Kate Millett. On the one hand she recognises the extreme pervasiveness of women's oppression and yet she stresses the wide range of sources of such oppression and the varied and different forms it takes. It's this very variety which constitutes the complex reality of sexual politics.

While patriarchy as an institution is a social constant so deeply entrenched as to run through all political, social or economic forms, whether of caste or class, feudality or bureaucracy, just as it pervades all major religions, it also exhibits great variety in history and locale.³⁶

The implications here are that it is difficult to specify the nature of patriarchy or indeed the relation between gender and class 'in general'. There is a similar argument here to the one we made earlier in relation to housing tenure. Sexual politics (defined here in its broadest sense) is bound up with a highly diverse range of practices and social relations. They

include, for example, relationships between men and women which may stem from their housing tenure or their relationships to the state welfare provision. More importantly still, the actual *combination* of these relationships in particular localities can be expected to affect women and their political alignments in quite varied ways.

So the forms of gender relations and of 'patriarchy' are highly complex and diverse. The precise form is dependent on its social and spatial contexts. Again the important thing to bear in mind are first the *combinations* in localities of gender with a range of other social relations and, second, the effect of such combinations on women's and men's lives and politics. We can outline some of the most important combinations between gender and other relations here.

One of the most important is the stage of the life-cycle which the household has reached and the resulting impact on women's lives. As we saw with the time budget studies, women still do overwhelmingly more domestic work than men, with males supposedly 'making up' for their deficiencies in the domestic sphere by doing more paid work. However, in some stages of the life-cycle and in some households such as two-earner families, the relationship in terms of sharing the domestic work does seem to get slightly closer to parity. A similar variability in the division of domestic labour also comes across very clearly in Ray Pahl's study of Sheppey. Fewer mothers take on paid work, for example, when their children are still young. On the other hand, this is usually for a comparatively short proportion of someone's life. For larger periods of life domestic tasks are somewhat more evenly shared, men getting more involved in domestic work as their partners take paid work and as both men and women enter into the later stage of their life and their obligations towards children start diminishing.

A person's class and the class of who she or he is living with certainly does seem important. On the basis of his Sheppey study Pahl suggests, for example, that to get her optimal division of domestic labour a woman should be over 45 and in full-time employment, preferably as some form of manager. Furthermore, she would be best off either being married to a manual or low-paid service worker (who, it seems are more likely to help an upper-class woman) or living on her own. Women, it seems, have to choose their jobs and men very carefully!

However, gender divisions of labour and divisions within households at different stages of the life-cycle do seem to combine with and, most importantly, compound and exacerbate other kinds of social polarisation. These particularly include the number of wage-earners in the household and the household's tenure.

I mentioned earlier the two households Pahl interviews and describes to illustrate his general point about housing tenure and the division of labour in families. One is an unemployed dock worker, his wife in part-time

employment and their three children living in a council house. They adopted a household strategy whereby the husband and an older daughter would take on the role of domestic labourer while the wife became a full-time worker in an old-people's home. Part of the strategy was that the wife's low weekly wage would be supplemented by the state's Family Income Supplement, combined with rate rebates. However, state-imposed gender discrimination rapidly put a stop to this strategy. As a letter from the DHSS said to the woman: 'Your family does not include a man who is normally in remunerative full time work.'³⁷ It might have been interesting to know how the actual division of labour would have worked out for this household if the woman had been the main wage-earner. My guess is that it would still have been her and her daughter who would have continued to do the greater part of the domestic work.

Pahl's other household (a relatively affluent couple who have saved up to move from a council house to a new owner-occupied house which they are now improving) seems at first exceptional in terms of who does the housework. It is, however, another illustration of how the domestic division of labour in a home tends to become more equal during the later stages of a household's life. The children are now old enough to have moved off to their own homes nearby. This couple's division of household tasks does seem very close to fifty-fifty. As they put it: 'the first one that sees it does it; it's as easy as that.' Sometimes, incidentally, it seems there are too many cooks in this particular household; if not inside the kitchen. On occasions both of them bring back food (sometimes even steak) to eat that night. But at this stage the capital equipment which they can afford comes in: 'If it is something that'll keep, it goes in the fridge or we freeze it.'³⁸

To summarise, capital has by no means conquered what Marx called 'the petty form of industry intended for self-consumption', if by 'conquering' we mean the abolition of unpaid domestic labour. Nor has increasing women's employment (albeit in the most menial jobs) dispensed with men's subordination of women. Rather, domestic labour (Marx's 'petty form of industry') is alive and well. Furthermore, despite the increase in female paid labour, it still generally takes the form of unpaid female labour.

Nevertheless, the combination of this labour with other factors is important in relation to its extent and its division between the sexes. Like the other elements of civil society we have been examining, domestic work is a product of the social relations in which people are caught up. We cannot easily identify a single factor which determines gender relations in the home and their effects on politics. Nevertheless, some generalisations are possible, the important factors being people's position in paid work, the number of income earners in a household, the family's stage in the life-cycle, housing tenure and state policy. Again, however, those households who are already in a poor position in employment often find

themselves becoming further penalised when it comes to 'civil society'.

Furthermore, when we come to look at combinations of employment, self-provisioning and housing tenure, we can begin to see some important social and political consequences. In theory self-provisioning is a way in which low-income households can improve their circumstances or, at the very least, 'get by'. To some extent this does take place; an important factor determining a person's circumstances being the number of income earners in the household. At the same time, however, the divisions between classes and genders at work tend to be strengthened and reinforced when it comes to the home.

Furthermore, when we move out of the social relations of the home to the wider community, we again find that it tends to be men and the dominant classes in employment (as well as those in owner occupation) who are tending to strengthen their positions. At the end of this chapter we will begin to see how these combinations affect people's politics. This is also an issue we will pursue more systematically in Chapter 5. Here I will be discussing the politics of gender in a rather wider spatial context.

Class, Gender, Race and 'Community'

The final main element in civil society is 'community': reciprocal, informal and possibly caring relationships between families, between friends and neighbours. Here is another way in which social life outside employment can be sustained. At the same time, however, this rather cosy word contains a number of divisions and conflicts.

A persistent emphasis in New Right and conservative thinking is the value of community life: mutual and co-operative self-help, independent of the market or of state support. Elements of the Left also give special emphasis to this aspect of civil society, particularly those opposed to top-heavy state control over people's lives. For both groups pressures to reduce state spending provide a powerful incentive to assume that 'community' is alive and well. What, however, is the reality of 'community' in contemporary Britain?

The literature on this subject is now extensive. The indications are again, however, that questions of class, gender and tenure once more intersect with one another to deeply affect the form and extent of community life. Those who give and benefit from 'community' once more tend to be the economically and socially stronger groups; especially the middle classes, some dominant members of which we met in Chapter 1. As a result, we cannot make too many comfortable assumptions about low-income and immobile households sharing experiences and caring for one another.

Once again, we need to be sensitive to how 'community' and associational life tie in to other kinds of social relations (especially those of class, race, property and gender) as well as other relationships resulting from the household's stage as regards childcare responsibilities.

Family Relations

Take first the relationships between families. One surprise to emerge from the recent literature as surveyed by Peter Willmott concerns the contact between and assistance given by relatives to members of their own family.³⁹ Studies of the 1950s and 1960s had suggested that these kinds of relationships were particularly important for working class households as a way in which they could combine to 'get by' in circumstances of unemployment or hardship. It seems, however, that it is now middle or service class people who engage most in this kind of activity. Despite the fact that they are socially and geographically mobile compared with other classes, there is no obvious tendency amongst the middle classes to abandon kinship relations. This is perhaps less surprising, however, when we bear in mind that relationships of this kind are not restricted to the same neighbourhood and that middle-class people with cars are able to maintain relatively high levels of contact with family members who do not live close by.

If, however, we are interested only in the importance of the immediate locality to different classes and groups, we find that working-class people are indeed more likely to form part of what Willmott calls a 'local extended family' consisting of, say, two or three families all living close to each other. Each family typically contains the parents, one or more of their children plus *their* children. Gender is especially important here, as the key links in this type of extended family are those between daughters and mothers. Proximity forms an essential basis of this kind of community life, with relations making visits nearly every day. These kinds of kin relationship are found, Willmott argues, amongst working class families in the areas of less population mobility such as the North of England, the Midlands, Scotland and Wales. Nevertheless, the type of labour market is again important firstly insofar as kin relations thrive where families remain relatively static. So a local labour market which contains a large number of suitable jobs for working class people tends to sustain close ties of this kind. Again, close family ties in a small-scale locality are more likely where a particular industry dominates the local workforce. Under these circumstances (examples are mining and dockyard industries) women's kinship ties are strengthened by the fact that men share the same job experience. Here remains, to go back to our earlier discussion, a form of 'vertical' community life in which households are still organising with one another to protect themselves.

Spatially close kinship networks are especially important for ethnic minorities; although there is no particular reason to romanticise these relationships. Asians and West Indians settled close to their compatriots when they arrived in Britain; partly through choice and partly because of discrimination in labour and housing markets. Hostility from white people is one reason why later generations continue to live close to their

families. Another reason stems again from the jobs market. Racial minorities are frequently forced to take jobs with anti-social hours. Extended families (or, more specifically, the women in extended families) form one way in which children can be looked after while parents go to work.

A variation on the 'local extended family' is what Willmott calls 'the dispersed extended family', one in which the family is more geographically scattered and the contacts less frequent. Nevertheless, meetings between families are regular; taking place, for example, to help out with regular shopping trips. Again, however, a family's ability to engage in this kind of support is critically dependent on household income, cars (and telephones) being of course essential. Willmott reckons, however, that this type of network operates for roughly half the population, spreading across middle-class and working-class households.

About a third of the population at any one time forms part of what Willmott calls a 'dispersed kinship network', one in which there is no regular contact. Members of the family give, however, personal and financial aid on special occasions such as childbirth or illness. Finally, a very small minority belong to a 'residual kinship network' in which contacts are absolutely minimal.

The overall picture as regards kin relations is, then, that they remain an important element in the lives of many classes and groups. In some areas working-class households are still combining with one another in a 'vertical' manner. The main recent changes, however, are in the extent to which these relations are still made in the same geographical area. There has been a steady reduction in the proportion of extended families that are locally-based and corresponding growth in the proportions of extended families and kin networks that are geographically dispersed. What seems to be happening is that community relations of this kind are alive and well. Again, however, it is the better-off households (those who, for example, can afford to run a car) who are predominantly benefiting from them.

Friendship Relations

Class and gender also appear to be critical factors in affecting patterns of friendship with, again, those who arguably need it most engaging in it least. Table 4.9 shows that higher-status people (and, in particular, higher status men) have, at least in the London Region, many more non-local friends than other groups and, as a result, more friends altogether. The difference between classes is largely a reflection of the men's experience in paid work, this being the way in which they (partly through 'vertical' employment-based association) are regularly linked to others outside the area in which they live.

Women, on the other hand, with lower status jobs, less access to cars and

being more tied to home and children, do not make the same wide range of acquaintances. Their form of community life tends, in Urry's terms, to be more 'horizontal'; associating with other women with whom they may have few employment-links. As the time budgets indicated, women's daily lives are, to a greater extent than those of men, oriented around home, community and friendship of other women. As we'll be seeing later, this kind of experience can have considerable effects on women's political alignments.

Table 4.9

Average Numbers of Local and Non-local Friends Met Socially during the Previous Week (London Region, 1970)

	Professional & managerial	Clerical	Skilled	Semi- skilled & unskilled	All
Men					
Local friends (living within 10 mins. walk)	2.93	2.36	2.91	3.16	2.89
Non-local friends	7.59	3.03	4.12	3.14	4.70
Total friends	10.52	5.39	7.03	6.30	7.59
Women					
Local friends (living within 10 mins. walk)	3.06	1.46	2.51	2.05	2.39
Non-local friends	3.31	2.53	1.69	1.44	2.18
Total friends	6.37	3.99	4.20	3.49	4.57

Source: P. Willmott, *Social Networks, Informal Care and Public Policy* Policy Studies Institute Research Report 655, 1986.

What is difficult to be sure of, however, is the extent to which this pattern can be generalised to areas outside London. My guess is that it can. Middle and upper class men are have the right kinds of work-based links to make a wide range of social contacts from paid work and to be sufficiently affluent and mobile to form acquaintances outside their neighbourhoods wherever they are. The importance of the London region lies in the fact that very large numbers of such people live and work here. Similarly, women and low-status men will, wherever they live and work, be in similar positions in terms of their relative lack of mobility, their involvement with home and children and inadequate access to high status jobs.

Finally, there is the important question of who people in different social positions actually associate with. Do friendships cross class or gender barriers? The bulk of the evidence here is that friendships and associational life tend to be segregated; the principal lines of separation again being those of occupational class, gender and stage in the lifecycle. In other words, members of the same class tend to associate with one another, men's informal associates tend to be men and women's closest friends are women.⁴⁰ In very broad terms, 'vertical' and 'horizontal' relations tend to be made between roughly the same classes and genders.

There are, however, exceptions to this general rule, and they again involve the service class. Goldthorpe's work shows clearly that upper-level male managers and professionals tend to have a larger and more diverse set of informal associates than groups in 'lower' social classes.⁴¹ They have a wide array of associates, even if their contacts made in professional life are especially important.

A similar pattern applies to membership of clubs and voluntary associations. Manual workers in particular tend to restrict their membership of such associations to a limited number of organisations; social clubs and trade unions being the two main examples. Members of the service class, by contrast, tend to belong to a wide range of such bodies. Certainly they belong to organisations linked to their work (professional bodies being a good example), but they also maintain extensive memberships elsewhere. They are well-represented in, for example, sporting, charitable, educational and political associations. This penetration of the middle classes into cultural and political life is, as we will see in Chapter 5, of some significance when it comes to explaining the political alignments of localities.

Neighbours

The third main form of community life in which people engage is contact between neighbours. This is contact which, in theory at least, can be converted into neighbourly help for people such as the elderly or single parents. It is also contact which, as I'll be arguing later, does much to explain emergent forms of politics around non-employment issues.

As regards reciprocal assistance between neighbours, Willmott and Pahl's work shows that we again cannot make too many comfortable assumptions about this kind of contact and assistance. They argue, contrary to the stereotype of the traditional working class community, that in fact it is again 'middle' or service class households (those with time, money and energy) who predominate both in creating and benefiting from this kind of neighbouring. To the extent that there is now a 'vertical' type of community life (with employment-based classes associating with one another outside work) it is dominated by 'middle class' or white collar groups.

Despite the fact that higher-status people more often move district for job reasons, the findings on social class went the other way. The 'highest' class people both gave and received most help and the 'lowest' class least, except over shopping and illness. Owners likewise helped each other more than tenants, and those living in houses more than those in flats. Thus contrary to the stereotype, middle-class suburbanites [are] more 'neighbourly' in this sense than working-class inner-city dwellers.⁴²

Table 4.10
Neighbourly Association and Occupational Class, 1982

	Social Class (b)			
	AB	C1	C2	DE
% visiting home of any neighbours (a)				
Weekly or more	38	42	42	42
Less than once a week	41	34	28	22
Never	21	24	30	37
Total	100	100	100	100
% of 'any of neighbours calling round for a chat'				
Weekly or more	41	45	50	50
Less than once a week	40	32	23	18
Never	19	23	27	32
Total	100	100	100	100

Notes

(a) Neighbours: people living in or near the same road/flats

(b) Class categories for 'heads of household':

Non-manual

A: 'Upper Middle' (higher managerial, admin, professional)

B: 'Middle' (intermediate professional, admin, professional)

C: 'Lower Middle' (supervisory, clerical, junior management, admin, professional)

Manual

C2: 'Skilled Working Class' (manual)

D: 'Working Class' (semi/unskilled manual)

E: 'Lowest levels of subsistence' (unemployed, state pensioners, widows)

Source: Market and Opinion Research International (MORI), 1982, quoted in P. Willmott, *Social Networks* (Table 4.9)

As regards more informal contact between neighbours, however, Table 4.10 shows that, although a relatively large proportion of working class people neither visit other households nor receive other people, when they do make such visits they do so more often. A key factor in explaining this difference is the stage in the life-cycle which the family has reached, with 'neighbouring' very much associated with women using one another's services as a means of caring for children. About half of women visit neighbours on a regular basis (compared with a third of men). Half of those with young children make neighbourly contacts, compared with about a third of those aged 24 or under.

A process which may be taking place here (although the evidence is by no means conclusive) is that the better-organised and unionised workers are using their organisations at work in a 'vertical' way not only to improve their employment-circumstances but to manage their lives outside employment. Recent research on workers in both the public and private sectors shows they are often in a better position to ensure that their work practices (especially their hours of work) are organised in ways which allow them to engage more fully than others in the community including the informal economy.⁴³

'Community' for Some

So what can we conclude as regards this aspect of civil society: the reciprocal contact and care offered by kin, friends and neighbours? As with the other aspects of civil society discussed earlier, it is very important to relate the forms and extents of community life to other aspects of household life. These include class positions, the demands made on women and housing tenure. When we look at these links we again find a strong sense in which those who are already in relatively strong social positions are promoting and engaging in this kind of activity as well as receiving it. To put the matter rather bluntly, the middle class (more particularly the 'service class' of upper-level managers, professionals and white collar technicians) are, in a very diverse set of ways, tending to colonise 'community.'

Nevertheless, those who are not in favoured positions are not necessarily passive. Low income and working class households in particular may be geographically immobile and may not be in a strong position in civil society. They can in theory, however, through formal or informal engagement in politics, try to change what is happening to them. I can now illustrate how this works out in practice, showing with the aid of two Mass Observation households how class positions and forms of civil society interact to affect their political alignments. We will pursue these connections more systematically in Chapter 5, showing how the emergent social and political movements in Britain can be partly explained by the fact that many people's lives (those of many women in particular) are as

much connected to their commitments and experiences in their communities as in their workplaces. The extent to which these forms of politics are really effective in creating social change is, however, a separate matter.

Class and Civil Society: Varying Prospects and Politics for Two Marginalised Households

We can now sum up what we have learnt so far and relate it to the central theme of this book: social change and its relationship to politics. I shall do this here by referring to the lives and politics of two more people from the Mass Observation Archive. These are women who, as part-time paid workers, are in relatively similar job-circumstances. They are both members of households which are relatively immobile. On the other hand, their circumstances in civil society (or, less formally, the context within which they hold these jobs) in the form of family relationships and tenure have distinctive implications for their well-being and their politics. They provide a link between the broader processes we have been discussing so far and the changing forms of politics in Britain which are discussed in the next chapter.

In Chapter 3 I outlined some of the main changes taking place in paid work, including the processes leading to the creation of more part-time (often female) labour. In Chapter 4 we have so far been concerned with the more general relationships in contemporary civil society and the ways in which they are linked into class and gender relations in the realm of paid work. Civil society, while it is the realm of consumer choice and freedom, is nevertheless deeply influenced by the class and gender divisions which we have already encountered in paid work.

Throughout this book the prime emphasis has been on social rather than spatial relations. I quite deliberately played down the spatial aspects of social change since explanation lies primarily in the realm of 'the social' rather than 'the spatial'. This is not, however, to deny that the effects of these social changes are experienced very unevenly or that people may mobilise politically around a shared conception of 'place'. This was evident in the studies of changes in paid work, their uneven impacts on different parts of Britain and the defence by households of an area such as Berkshire; in this case against unwelcome incursions from house-builders. Similarly, it should be clear that changes to contemporary civil society (for example, the acquisition of capital gains through home ownership) are also experienced very unevenly. Nevertheless, both the ways in which these social processes combine in quite complex ways and also their effects are quite difficult to assess.

Peter Townsend's discussion of poverty in Britain and 'the problem of the poor areas' provides the right kind of perspective here on the importance of the social rather than the spatial:

The dispersion of poverty is wide. Although the survey showed there are higher proportions of the population in some areas than in others, there are relatively prosperous people in even the poorest areas, and substantial numbers of poor people in the richest areas.⁴⁴

The scale of the analysis is not the most important thing here. What is more important is firstly how actions of international and nationally-based companies, decisions of national and local governments and individuals and group actions within households and communities combine in particular contexts to affect people's lives. At the same time, however, we need to see how these processes come to inform people's actions and politics; actions and politics which can change, as well as simply reproduce society.

To illustrate what I have in mind here I now want to turn to the two additional Mass Observers. As it happens, these Observers come from what some people might think of relatively 'affluent' areas. The first lives in a town immediately adjacent to north-east London. Her household moved here from one of the inner London Boroughs and still keeps up contacts with friends and family there. They now live in an area of mainly owner-occupied housing and an area where few council houses have recently been built. Unemployment in this area, at 11.7 per cent in 1987, stands at a little under the national average. The second woman lives in Devon, another supposedly 'affluent region', but one which has many blackspots of poverty and bad housing. Unemployment in the particular locality from which this person is writing was, at 12.9 per cent in 1986, almost the same as the national average.

The London woman is married to a car worker who has a skilled and relatively secure job. Their children have left home and they have recently bought their council flat. The woman from Devon is also married to a skilled worker though, due to declining company orders, her husband's firm is putting him and a number of others on to short-time. Having long been a 'central' worker, he now finds himself being 'peripheralised'. She, however, lives in a council house. Furthermore, she and her husband continue to share this house with three of their six children, one of whom is a 19-year-old daughter with occasional part-time work. The different circumstances of these two women who, in terms of their paid work appear rather similar, have major implications for these households' 'self-servicing' in the home, for their involvement in domestic work and community life. And most importantly from our viewpoint the differences have considerable implications for their politics.

Housing Tenure and Self-servicing

Both households are what the West Country woman calls 'Do It

Yourselves'. However, the London woman lives close to what she calls 'a posh money area', with houses in nearby 'Millionaires' Row' fetching £80,000 in 1982; a time when average national house prices were around £24,000. This provides a clear incentive for this household to put as much effort as possible into DIY. Following a disastrous and expensive episode with 'cowboy' builders, the husband has recently completed a porch, an archway, and a crazy paved path incorporating a six foot wrought iron gate. 'Everything is now first class', the London woman writes, and it was possible because this couple's children now have now left home and they have the money and the time to spend on their home.

The household in the West Country also puts a lot of effort into DIY:

My daughters and I paint, wallpaper, make curtains, lay tiles and we often get asked by people who know us if we could work for them and they would pay us. We do not do that as we never have the time. We lay our own carpets, but that is a job better done professionally.

The house itself, however, urgently needs repairs, if only to save on heating bills: 'It's a house built in 1922 and it has never been modernised, is very draughty and expensive on heating in winter. It has no upstairs toilet.'

These more basic jobs remain, however, largely undone; there is no financial incentive and the Devon household has a local authority bureaucracy to deal with: 'My husband does not bother because "the house is not ours and never will be." You also have to ask permission to do things. We have a big book of rules.'

Furthermore, this family with its income earners in irregular work and supporting three children is, for at least the foreseeable future, trapped in public sector housing. This is because they never got started with home ownership and it has remained out of their reach.

We got our council house in August 1952. We had been asked how much rent we could afford. 'About £1' was what I remember saying. The man worked out that £1 was approximately a fifth of our income and that was about right, so we were allocated a council house with very little to put in it but we were very happy. Once we started paying rent as high as that (and it went up regularly every year) we could never save to buy a house, we were stuck.

The result of this combination is a stark and growing division in standard of living and in status between her household and that of the owner-occupiers in the same area. It's also a division which, if they had been capable of foreseeing it, would have fundamentally changed this couple's strategy towards child-rearing and house-acquisition.

Having lived this long, 56 years, when I look back on life, if family planning was as good as it is today I would have had less children and bought my own house. I work with people much younger than myself who pay about £30 a quarter to building societies and own property worth £30,000. I pay about £60 a month rent and own nothing.

However, as she and her husband well know, even home ownership is not a guarantee of security. Some of her husband's work colleagues with their own homes are now not to be envied: 'My husband said, men he works with who are buying their own home and have always enjoyed a higher standard of living than us are quite suicidal when there is talk of redundancies.'

Community

For both these working class women there are similarities when it comes to community life. They live close to and regularly visit relations and see nearby friends. Nevertheless, the different circumstances make a considerable difference to the precise kinds of relationships involved. The London householders, being at a later and better-off stage in their lives, actively support friends and relations. Furthermore, the husbands' working life impinges on home and community life in different ways.

The London family retains, in modified form, the type of close knit, 'vertical' community life in which many working class households used to engage in London's East End.

We have kept our family close because we were born and bred in the East End of London and brought up in the closeness of brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles living a few doors away or just around the corner. With the slum clearance and war damage to houses, everyone got 'split up' and we were moved out here.

Nevertheless, her daughters still live nearby and they retain a supportive network of assistance: 'We share our money if one of us is "short", and we are at the moment buying groceries for the youngest family, where the husband is unemployed.'

Again, friends and neighbours are often included in this household's social life; friends, for example, often being included in family holidays and neighbours (especially elderly neighbours) getting regular support from their household.

For the Devon household nearby family is also useful at a time of mounting insecurity. This household is, however, in a more dependent position:

Family Life. This year my husband was made redundant and reinstated five times. On one occasion he was made redundant 10 am in the morning and reinstated 4 pm the same day. My husband has got so bad tempered,

times I feel like running away. We are lucky that we have a large family and we can always find someone to confide in, have a laugh with and borrow a pound or two from.

Similarly, friends and relations are especially useful when it comes to small domestic jobs around the house:

If I want something mended firstly I ask relations and friends if they can help me. I would pay them for anything they have to buy and they would not take any money for working for me. I would find out what they wanted and buy them something for their trouble.

One of biggest concerns of this woman, however, is the separation of her husband from the household as his job circumstances deteriorate. His workmates (unlike, it seems, those of the man in the London car factory) have an active club life. This means that for the man at least civil society is 'vertically organised'. Home and neighbourhood are relatively unimportant to him and indeed he is increasingly turning to his workmates rather than the home as his working life deteriorates. This increases problems of household spending-money and places extra burdens on the woman.

One of my worries is the fact that when my husband goes unemployed again he will still want to keep company with his friends at the club and of course money is needed for that kind of companionship. Shortage of money is a misery. Women still seem to put up with a lot more than men will.

Employment, Domestic Work and Gender Relations

Finally, the different circumstances of the two women have considerable implications for the ways in which they share domestic and paid work. Whilst the London household hardly shares the total amount of work equally, of all the Mass Observation households we've examined it comes closest. Again, this more equal division seems largely related to the fact that there are no longer any children to cater for, partly a product of the fact that there are two wage earners in the households and also, of course, the financial incentive of DIY.

On the one hand, the London woman writes 'all maintenance on house, e.g. painting, papering, repairing, carried out by Husband (expert DIY)'. Her rather ambiguous statement about her husband's sharing of the domestic work seems, however, to get closer to the real division involved: 'My husband does like to sit and watch television so we tend to share housework and cooking and decorating.' The fact is that this household is still dependent on the woman for the great mass of domestic work.

Furthermore, this domestic work is highly dependent on the fact that her paid job is part-time. Here is her account of a typical weekday:

Housework and Maintenance

- 7.30 am Rise, wash, dress, cook breakfast, eat breakfast and wash up
- 8.30 am Clean kitchen, prepare dinner for evening
- 9.00 am Make bed, clean bathroom, collect dirty linen
- 9.30 am Wash by hand any necessary garments, spin dry and iron same
- 10.15 am Cup of tea and a biscuit
- 10.30 am Dust and Hoover lounge and hall and stairs (1st day)
Dust and Hoover bedrooms (2nd day)
- 11.30 am Get washed and changed ready to get to work by 12.30
- 12.00 pm Shopping on way to work. Work from 12.30 till 6 pm
Sometimes, if no shopping to be done, gardening or visiting mother and father for a short time. All work done by myself
- 6.30 pm Cook dinner and wash up
- 7.30 pm Bath and, if not going out visiting, will watch TV while sewing or knitting or writing letters
- 11.30 pm Hot drink and retire!

But if this woman is under pressure domestically, even greater demands are being made of the woman in Devon. These stem from her efforts both to run a home and to look after three children at home.

I get up about 7.45, pack three lunches; one for a school child, one for my working daughter and one for myself, fill two flasks of tea and have breakfast. Then get my daughter off to school and go to work. My employer picks me up and takes me to work in a car.

I work until 1 pm and return home 1.30. First thing I do is put on the immersion heater to get hot water for dishwashing and cleaning. After I have had something to eat there are always dishes to wash and plenty of housework, cleaning and tidying. The washing goes into the washing machine now and that is a great time saver.

Two afternoons a week I go shopping. My daughter comes home from school about 4 pm and I try to get home about this time. Then I make a hot meal to be ready about 6 pm when everyone is at home. After that, dishes to wash although sometimes I feel too tired to bother with them and wash them next day.

My husband does a little gardening now, but I do all the shopping, washing, cleaning, looking after the children and decorating.

The real pressures for this woman come in trying to find a balance between her paid work and domestic work. On the one hand, she needs to be at home to look after her children and her husband who is not only sometimes off work but is frequently sick. On the other hand, she needs to work as long as possible to bring in the income. The situation sounds desperate: 'We are in a trap. My 19 year old daughter is home all the week, my husband home every other week, fires burning all day long. I should be home working, but I'm getting money.' For this woman the home is far from being a centre of autonomy and freedom. As she puts it, 'There is a lot of tension in the home at the moment.' By contrast, her low-paid and part-time job offers a release: 'It is good to have regular work, the friendship is great. I look forward to going to work for a break from the monotony of home life. It makes me feel wanted and we have a few laughs.'

Paid Work, Civil Society and Politics

How do these varying circumstances affect the two women's political alignments? There are, it must be said, considerable areas of agreement between the two women. Both are particularly concerned about unemployment. The London woman is concerned not so much for herself and her husband as for her relatives. She writes, in 1981, about the Tory Government as follows:

All sorts of issues are swaying me away from the government which I had hoped at the beginning of its reign might be different. Sadly, they have gone from bad to worse, and the unemployed *must* be the biggest issue. Even though here in the South East we have been 'cushioned' from the worst, the 'creeping in' feeling is now here and my local job centre has nothing to offer the unemployed at all.

For the woman in the West Country unemployment is also 'the biggest problem today'. This household has had personal experience of unemployment, but her prime concern is with future generations and their inability to get properly housed without regular employment: 'There is no way to improve yourself unless you get your foot in the door when you are very young and you need to have a secure job with a regular income to do that.'

The decline in public services is also of growing concern to the two women. For the London woman the National Health Service 'has deteriorated in recent years' and 'successive governments have "milked" the money paid in by the workers for other things.' Similarly, the local Tory council has closed an infants school against the parents' wishes. 'It doesn't matter what the public want', she writes, 'this world is still run by the strong and wealthy. Sounds like Greenham Common!' Another part of the health service has also declined in her area:

The other cuts I have noticed lately are in the dental health service. So many dentists have decided to go 'private'. My own dentist for 25 years has gone private only, and so I had to shop around for a new one. After finding one in town, he has so many patients it's hard to get booked in. He stipulates that if you do not attend regularly (6 months) he can charge you private fees. Whether or not this is allowed I don't know, but there is no option if I don't accept it! So much for progress!

All these changes lead her, despite the fact that her council is Tory, to write: 'Up to now my vote in the election is wavering between Labour and SDP. *No Way* will I vote Conservative.' Similarly, the woman in the West Country (who, like her husband, has made regular use of the National Health Service) has been watching the state of her hospitals worsen and coming to her own conclusions:

The Health Service

Yes, it certainly seems to have deteriorated in recent years and the Government should be ashamed. If Mrs Thatcher takes the Health Service off us I think I would go extreme Left. We need security. I would prefer big hospitals to big bombs, but that is not the policy of this Government.

However, the particular combination of circumstances affecting these two people is also leading them to see the world rather differently; with contrasting kinds of demands and politics emerging. The West Country woman, under pressure from both her paid work and her household is, to an increasing extent, seeing the issues involved and the demands she's making as those of gender as well as social class.

Females are *expected* to make a contribution to the household, to pay for cars, mortgages etc. We should be treated fairer than we are. Part-time workers are not mentioned as being an important part of our economy, yet I and many friends do not get a week's holiday a year.

Furthermore, this has led her in the past to reject both the Labour Party and her union as a way of registering her demands.

I now vote Liberal as I feel unions are for men, they are one cause of inflation and because they compete with one another. For the last three years I have worked part time and at home every day of every week and I listen to the unions shouting for fair treatment for people who get a month or more paid holiday a year.

Although she thinks 'no party is fair to women', this kind of politics for

part-time employed females has recently, however, led her to become more politically active. Whilst writing for Mass Observation she seems to become cautiously more supportive of the Labour Party's programme. At the same time, however, the men in her family are becoming increasingly disillusioned and inactive: 'All the females in our family are still more enthusiastic about voting than the men are. The men say no one is worth voting for, nothing can be changed. It's just not worth bothering to vote.'

One of the reasons they may not bother to vote is that they see the rest of the local electorate as stacked against them. Of the 1983 general election results in her area (one with strong Liberal traditions and a well-known Liberal candidate) she writes resignedly: 'We are sad Mr Alderton did not win, but we often say if a monkey was a Conservative candidate in this area it would get in.'

So these two people, relatively tied to their localities and in similar situations of paid and unpaid work, actually maintain very different standards of living and have very different prospects. These contrasts depend on the stage in the life-cycle they are at, the number of wage earners in the household and, perhaps most important of all, their housing tenure. These, as I argued earlier, are all important ingredients in 'the politics of locality'.

The similarities and differences between the circumstances and everyday lives of these two people, combined with their understanding of what governments can do to change these circumstances, lie behind their political alignments. These alignments themselves have similarities and differences. Both these people are opposed to Conservatism in its Thatcherite form and looking for parties that will improve public services. But one of them is particularly trying to improve the position of women. These two people are illustrating a more general process whereby individuals form their own political positions; positions which are themselves, of course, endorsing or rejecting the programmes of political parties. I now want to examine more systematically the creation of political alignments, the making of political strategies and the role of locality.

Notes

1. See also, for example, S. Lash, J. Urry, *The End of Organised Capitalism* (Oxford: Polity, 1987). For a compressed version of the argument see Lash and Urry's 'The Shape of Things to Come', *New Socialist*, January 1987.
2. My account of civil society is based on J. Urry, *The Anatomy of Capitalist Societies* (London: MacMillan, 1981).
3. K. Marx, *Grundrisse* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975) p. 244 (Quoted in

Urry, *The Anatomy*).

4. A. Gorz, *Farewell to the Working Class: an Essay on Post-Industrial Socialism* (London: Pluto, 1982), p. 101. Quoted in P. Saunders, *Social Theory and the Urban Question*, 2nd edn (London: Hutchinson, 1986).
5. P. Saunders *Social Theory*, p. 351.
6. Private communication with J. Gershuny research team, University of Bath.
7. J. Robinson *et al.*, 'Everyday life in twelve countries', in A. Szalai (ed.), *The Use of Time* (The Hague: Mouton, 1972). pp. 119-120.
8. J. Gershuny *et al.*, 'Time budgets: preliminary analyses of a national survey', *Quarterly Journal of Social Affairs*, vol.2, no.1, 1986.
9. D. Allen, 'Regional variations in food habits', in D. Oddy, D. Miller (eds), *The Making of the Modern British Diet* (London: Croom Helm, 1976); quoted in R. Hudson, A. Williams, *The United Kingdom* (London: Harper & Row, 1986).
10. On 'vertical' and 'horizontal' civil societies see J. Urry, 'Some themes in the analysis of the anatomy of contemporary capitalist societies', *Acta Sociologica*, vol.25, no.4, pp. 405-18.
11. On Sheffield and the effect of a 'vertically organised' civil society on housing provision, see Chapter 5 (by Mark Goodwin) of P. Dickens *et al.*, *Housing, States and Localities* (London: Methuen 1985).
12. See Lash and Urry, *The End of Organised Capitalism*.
13. R. Forrest and A. Murie (School for Advanced Urban Studies, University of Bristol) have studied the housing histories of a group of exceptionally affluent and mobile core employees. See their paper: 'The affluent home owner: labour market position and the shaping of housing histories', *Sociological Review*, vol.25, no.2, 1987.
14. P. Saunders 'Beyond housing classes: the sociological significance of private property rights and means of consumption', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, vol.8, no.2, 1984.
15. On 'ontological security' and its relevance to urban studies, see A. Sayer, 'Defining the urban', *Geojournal*, vol 9, no.3, 1984.
16. Source for house prices: Nationwide Building Society.
17. For a recent account of the council house sales programme, see R. Forrest, A. Murie, 'Marginalisation and subsidised individualism: the sale of council houses in the restructuring of the British welfare state', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, vol. 10, no.1, 1986.
18. On housing and race, see in particular Chapter 5 of C. Brown, *Black and White Britain* (London: Heinemann, 1984).
19. R. Pahl *Divisions of Labour* (London: Blackwell, 1985).
20. This account depends on J. Barlow, 'Economic Restructuring and Housing Provision in Britain', University of Sussex Working Paper in Urban and Regional Studies 54 (1986).
21. For a fuller account see J. Barlow, M. Savage, 'The politics of growth:

cleavage and conflict in a Tory heartland', *Capital and Class*, no.30, 1986. The figures on forms of employment and households in Greater London and the UK come from *Regional Trends* 22 (London: HMSO, 1987).

22. Quoted in R. Pauley, 'Riding a high-tech wave', *Financial Times*, 30 June 1986.

23. See Barlow and Savage 'The politics of growth', and J. Barlow and M. Savage, 'Labour and housing market change: the case of Berkshire', in J. Allen, C. Hamnett (eds) *Housing Markets and Labour Markets in Britain* (forthcoming).

24. Quoted in *Sunday Times*, 10 March 1985.

25. Ibid. On the role of the middle classes in environmental pressure groups, see in particular P. Lowe, J. Goyder, *Environmental Groups in Politics* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1983).

26. Quoted in Barlow and Savage, 'The politics'.

27. *Sunday Times*, 10 March 1985.

28. Quoted in Barlow and Savage, 'The politics'.

29. D. Bell, *The Coming of Post Industrial Society* (London: Heinemann, 1974), p. 127.

30. The word 'services' is in fact a source of rich confusion in the academic as well as the official literature. One categorisation is between (i) service industries involving, for example, the making of an intangible product such as service in a restaurant; (ii) service occupations in the public as well as in the private sector; (iii) service functions: the specific uses people derive from both the service and the non-service industries. See J. Urry 'Deindustrialisation, households and politics', in L. Murgatroyd et al., *Localities, Class and Gender* (London: Pion, 1985).

31. See J. Gershuny, *After Industrial Society?* (London: MacMillan, 1984); this book also contains a useful review of the 'post industrial society' literature.

32. R. Pahl, *Divisions of Labour*.

33. K. Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, Part 1 (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1959), p. 159.

34. F. Engels, *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1972).

35. On the relationship between Marxism and feminism see in particular L. Sargent (ed.), *The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism* (London: Pluto 1981). Hartman, in her chapter 'The unhappy union of Marxism and feminism: towards a more progressive union' argues that 'the material basis of patriarchy is men's control over women's labour power.' (p. 18). For a development of this view see, in particular, Chapter 3 of S. Walby, *Patriarchy at Work* (Oxford: Polity, 1986).

36. K. Millett, *Sexual Politics* (London: Virago, 1977).

37. R. Pahl, *Divisions of Labour*, p. 303.

38. R. Pahl, *Divisions of Labour*, p. 308.

39. P. Willmott, *Social Networks, Informal Care and Public Policy* Policy Studies Institute Research Report 655 (1986) and J. Goldthorpe *et al.*, *Social Mobility and Class Structure in Modern Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).
40. P. Willmott, *Social Networks*, p. 49.
41. J. Goldthorpe, *Social Mobility*, Chapter 7.
42. P. Willmott, *Social Networks*, p. 57.
43. This point emerged during work which Mike Savage and I have been doing in Slough, Berkshire. Paper available.
44. P. Townsend, *Poverty in the United Kingdom* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p. 563.

Class Politics, Cross-Class Politics and National-Local Government Relations

So far I have argued, with the aid of the people from the Mass Observation Archive, that people's politics can be seen as the demands they make and the political strategies they endorse (in particular the strategies of national governments) to deal with the specific circumstances of their lives. The demands might take the form of increased public spending; for example, spending to improve the rail network for company executives or better health services in the West Country. Equally, they may take the form of demands for more market-oriented political programmes. A stockbroker may well, for example, support a government which does not seriously interfere with the workings of the City of London. Some working-class households may, in addition to demanding more welfare, be tempted to vote for a market-oriented policy if they think it will bring more jobs to their area. In this chapter I want to develop the theme of politics more systematically, looking not only at the ways people vote but the tensions between national governments and subordinate groups.

The chapter is organised historically. The first part describes and explains an important post-war development in British politics. On the one hand, national governments have been attempting to develop strategies for Britain as a whole. These have consisted of either 'one nation' strategies intended to attract the support of the whole population or 'two nation' strategies aimed at support from a limited section of the population. On the other hand, the same period has seen increased variation in patterns of political allegiance: a product of the increasingly uneven nature of British society with, as I have described earlier, growing social divisions between regions and between suburbs and inner cities.

The second part of this chapter looks at recent events. These social and spatial divisions in contemporary Britain are now proving difficult for national governments (and opposition parties) to contain. Underlying the Conservative government's abolition of the Greater London Council and the Metropolitan County Councils was the fact that they were supporting groups and political strategies which were in fundamental opposition to

the policies laid down by national government.

Despite the abolitions, the tensions and conflicts over strategy still persist. The fundamental opposition to national government of, for example, the City Councils of Liverpool and Sheffield and the London councils of Lambeth, Brent and Haringey are amongst the most publicised. Less publicised are the strategies of a wider range of authorities towards issues such as women's rights and defence policy. In different ways, and to varying extents, many of these councils are also developing their own, sometimes highly assertive, strategies towards the restructuring of the economy, welfare-provision, and the support of black people.

Perhaps even more important, many of these local strategies represent a fundamental challenge to the national Labour Party. What is not yet clear is how or whether the national Labour Party can convincingly endorse and pursue such policies bearing in mind its need to attract and retain a wide range of support and not just that of the dispossessed groups such as those concentrated in inner urban areas.

But I also argue that some of the rhetoric over national-local government relations has only a remote relation to reality and needs disentangling. As it turns out, some of the main beneficiaries of these conflicts have been neither the supporters of national government nor the supporters of the new social movements supported by some local governments. White-collar public sector workers (arguably one of the most powerful groupings in terms of influence on contemporary government policy) have strengthened their position in the process: on occasion at the expense of those groups of people for whom the original demands were made.

To put this argument somewhat differently: the discussion about 'central control' versus 'local democracy' is partly misplaced. Local governments still have considerable freedoms (and a good deal of central government support) to carry out policies for their regions. What is actually happening is that dominant and subordinate groups in British society are using the institutions of local and national government (through the ballot box or otherwise) to pursue their own interests. Amongst these groups are again the middle classes, including the better-organised state employees. Amongst the groups offering resistance, but often losing out, are women and other supposed 'minorities'.

A note on the words 'local' and 'national' is appropriate here. In turning to politics we find these words can be used with some confidence. In discussing the uneven development of paid work and civil society we found that what seemed like 'local' or 'national' processes were in fact the result of complex combinations of decisions by, for example, companies operating at a national scale or households in which gender relations were being negotiated on the level of the home or the neighbourhood. By contrast, politics is of course organised on a territorial basis. It's in the realm of

government that 'nation', 'region' and 'local' have real legal, electoral and financial meanings. As we'll see shortly, however, this has not stopped companies, households and other groups using national and local governments to pursue their interests.

National Government: from One-Nation to Two-Nation Strategies

The main point to emphasise here is the growing spatial unevenness of British society and its reflection in divisions between on the one hand national government strategies and, on the other hand, demands for local accountability. This 'local accountability' is partly a demand in itself, one instance being the Greater London Council's campaign against abolition. Its struggle to maintain local democracy for the London region was explicitly couched in terms of 'say no to no say'. But local accountability is also a demand that strategy should reflect the material circumstances (the labour markets, the level of public services, house prices and so on) of particular areas.

First, let's examine changing forms of national government and, in particular, the change from 'one nation' to 'two nation' strategies. Bob Jessop defines the difference between these strategies in broad, but concise, terms:

One nation strategies aim at an expansive hegemony in which the support of the entire population is mobilised through material concessions and symbolic rewards (as in 'social imperialism' or 'Keynesian welfare state' projects). In contrast 'two nation' strategies are aimed at a more limited hegemony and concerned to mobilise the support of strategically significant sectors of the population and to pass the costs of the project to other sectors (as in fascism and monetarism).¹

Typically, central and local governments of all kinds are in the business of creating alliances or blocs of social and economic power around strategies for the territory in question. What are these strategies about? Very broadly, they are all about capital accumulation; the management of a society in such a way that capital is productive, profitable and competitive. The situation is, however, far more complex than this. Capital can be accumulated in a number of different ways and can involve a number of different relationships between groups of people. One of the demands by some of the more radical left-wing local authorities in recent years has been called 'restructuring for labour': managing the capital accumulation in such a way as to swing the benefits towards labour and away from capital. Whether these different types of strategy work in the way in which they are intended and precisely which sections of capital

and labour actually thrive is, of course, a separate matter. Government strategies themselves broadly reflect the relative balance of power between different social groups (between capital and labour, between men and women and between, say, the City of London and the car industry) and there is certainly no guarantee that governments will succeed in their aims.

The creation of blocs of support can be achieved in a number of ways. Elections and the formal democratic process are the best-known ways. Another (one particularly associated with one-nation strategies) is through the formal inclusion into the policy-making process of key social interests. For much of the post-war period, for example, the Trades Union Congress and the Confederation of British Industry were regularly and actively consulted as governments in power formed strategies over such key issues as wages and incomes policy or public sector spending.

A central element of this 'corporatist' type of politics is 'the national interest', the overarching notion that whatever the differences between groups of people (such as capital and labour) there is more to be gained through working together.² Furthermore, what Jessop calls 'material concessions' (such as a full-blown welfare state) offered by governments have chimed in unison with Keynesian economic philosophy which saw public spending outside the realm of production as a way of stimulating the private economy.

One Nation strategy in Britain was most fully developed during the Second World War. This was a time when 'the national interest' was self-evident and when, for a brief period, the relationships between the principal social groupings in Britain shifted in favour of national consensus. Re-armament shifted the balance of power towards industrial capital and working-class interests and temporarily away from the more typically dominant centres of economic power in Britain: especially the City and landed interests. Arguably too (although this is strongly contested by some) the social position of women became strengthened during this wartime period as many were recruited into the workforce.³

These shifts in social and economic power had immediate implications for national government policy during and immediately after the war. As is well known, the policy included not only attempts to intervene directly in the running of the economy but, in response to working class demands and the demands of women for better social conditions, a new and large-scale welfare state. The 1943 Beveridge Report was of course a milestone here, identifying the 'Five Giants' of 'Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness'. These giants were to be slain by a comprehensive system of national insurance providing 'cradle to the grave' protection. Other elements of the post-war settlement included a large-scale public sector housing programme, one in which local authorities were used as instruments of national government to raise housing standards.⁴

This, then, was an exceptionally strong 'One Nation' era. Here, as an illustration of the spirit of the times, is a Cabinet statement drafted out by Lord Halifax in 1941 to explain the long-term aims of the War.

Just as in order to achieve victory in War we are mobilising all the resources of the Nation, so in peace it will be our aim to develop an orderly plan for both town and countryside not only to produce wealth, but to afford the surroundings in which happy lives may be lived.⁵

For all this rhetoric, however, national government actually failed seriously to re-organise the social relations and operations of different sectors of the economy. 'Intervention' (including nationalisation of some sectors) was not intended to affect how production was organised. Indeed, intervention in the sphere of production would have been out of line with the central tenets of Keynesian philosophy. The main feature of Keynesianism is not to interfere with production itself but to provide a suitable economic environment in which production can take place. One way is through the manipulation of interest, tax and exchange rates; these being envisaged as a way of influencing levels of public consumption and investment by industrialists. A second way, as I have mentioned, is to expand public spending as a way of stimulating the private economy back into production.

Whilst the organisation of the formal economy remained largely untroubled, the organisation of the domestic economy (and its links to the formal economy) was hardly discussed. Nevertheless, as the War came to an end the twin demands on women to be both paid workers and home-makers started to reassert themselves. Sophie Watson (quoting a 1947 Ministry of Labour *Economic Survey*) argues that, following the early post-war period in which the numbers of women in paid work decreased from about 5.25 million to under five million, women started to be encouraged back. But this was only if 'family circumstances' were not too time-consuming.

The message was to work outside the home only for whatever length of time they could spare, whether full-time or part-time; the Government was not appealing to 'women with very young children, although for those who wanted to volunteer, or who had children a little older there were many places in nurseries and creches'. In reality, the number of nursery places was small.⁶

Soon after the rather optimistic official pronouncements women were in fact largely obliged to withdraw from the labour market while they had small children. When they returned they were obliged to take up relatively low-paid and under-unionised jobs.

Corporatist, and consensual, 'one nation' strategies remained the preferred mode for national governments for most of the postwar period. Here, for example, is Harold Wilson's appeal to the TUC in 1964 for an incomes policy. Again, 'the national interest' looms large; an interest which in this case excluded people such as landlords who appeared to be making an unfair quick profit while the rest of the nation was pulling its weight.

We have the right to ask for an incomes policy because we are prepared to contribute the three necessary conditions. First an assurance of rising production and rising incomes, so that the sacrifice, the restraint for which we ask is matched by an assurance that it will result in increasing production and increased rewards. Second, an assurance of equity and social justice, in that our policies will be directed to the benefit of the nation as a whole and not to the advantage of a sectional interest. Third, an assurance that what we ask for in wages and salaries will apply equally to profits and dividends and rent. (Applause) We shall not create a free-for-all for the speculator and the land profiteer and the landlord – and then ask wage and salary earners alone to show a concern for the national interest that others are not required to show.⁷

Very similar strategies were pursued up until the mid-1970s with, again, promises of much-improved social and welfare provision if organised labour entered into a bargain with capital to moderate wage claims. Here, for example, is a report on Harold Wilson's attempt to achieve a Social Contract with the unions in 1974. 'An incomes policy that would break into the prices spiral' meant:

A bargain would have to be struck involving fairer taxation, better housing, a fairer system of education and a health service. There would be an attack on speculation and inequality. Labour believed that the TUC would cooperate if a firm grip could be gained on prices. That would be done by subsidising key foods, slowing down the present runaway rise in the cost of living, easing the burden of rents, mortgages and the costs of land. Mr Wilson believed the TUC would honour its side of the bargain if those things could be achieved.⁸

The underlying strategy here was one of industrial modernisation. The Labour Party was attempting to incorporate not only the manual working class and the public sector workers. It was also (and this is significant for the arguments we will make in Chapter 6) recruiting senior 'service class' private sector managers whose objectives were modernisation and the introduction of the latest technologies. Despite this, however, the organisation of production itself was again not seriously tampered with.

Keynesian regulation (orchestrating demand through public spending and manipulation of exchange and interest rates) still failed to seriously intervene in the realms of capital investment and labour-processes. Recognition of unpaid domestic work was even more remote.

Some breaks with this corporatist, consensual, form of national politics were made before the advent of the Thatcher government in 1979. At the end of this book we will find Edward Heath arguing that monetarist strategies have undermined social cohesion. He is in fact well-qualified to make such a judgement since this is the kind of strategy his government introduced between 1970 and 1972. The context then (as now) was the continuing decline of the industrial economy's productivity and competitiveness. The strategy to reverse this decline is now very familiar. On the one hand, trade-union legislation was introduced. This allowed the Secretary of State for Employment to order ballots amongst workers and to declare states of emergency in the event of industrial unrest. On the other hand, subsidies and incentives to industry were scrapped and public spending and taxation reduced. Not only did the strategy fail to work (public spending was not in fact much reduced and industry failed to invest on the necessary scale to become competitive) but the legislation sparked off a wave of industrial militancy; the sit-ins at the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders being amongst the best-known examples.

Another example of pre-Thatcherite monetarist and non-consensual strategy was that adopted by the Labour government in the late 1970s. This was not, however, wholly intentional. It was largely a result of preconditions made by the International Monetary Fund on their loan to the British government.

With the arrival of the radical Conservative government in 1979 monetarist philosophy was applied with conviction and enthusiasm. Unadorned market principles were applied, once more combined with increased reliance on the law as the main regulator of management-labour relations.⁹ Capital and labour were, in formal corporatist terms, excluded from the planning of strategy. 'Beer and sandwiches in Number Ten' were, for the union leaders at least, distinctly off the menu. Capital, nevertheless, retained a very considerable watching brief over government. Highly influential was the monetarist-inclined Institute of Directors. They managed to displace the influence of the less radical Confederation of British Industry and, in the process, helped to construct strategies which operated more to the benefit of financial rather than manufacturing capital.

The 'strategically significant' sectors of the population (in Jessop's terms) under this strategy were never made fully explicit. Some inferences can be drawn, however, from the Thatcher government's actions and its electoral support. The strategically 'insignificant' seemed to include those people (such as the miners) who were not prepared to accept

management-labour strategies which gave free rein to management. Also excluded were those people who were heavily reliant on key components of the original welfare state, especially public sector housing. Also less than significant were those local authorities resisting national government policy towards public spending, adopting assertive public-sector intervention into the private economy, supporting the causes of women and black people and declaring their areas to be nuclear free zones. We will return to them shortly.

Judging from the 1987 election statistics, some of the most 'strategically significant' sections of the population to the Conservatives are now the service class professionals and managers, 59 per cent of whom voted Conservative. Sixty-five per cent of the *private* sector managers and professionals supported them. And, bearing maps 1.1-1.4 (p. 15-18) in mind, the most strategically significant geographical area is to an increasing extent the prosperous region of what Doreen Massey calls 'high-tech land' between Bristol and Cambridge. More broadly (though in reality, as we'll shortly see, it is considerably more complicated than this) the 'two nations' are reflected in Britain's 'North' and 'South'.

The main point here, however, is that the 'One' and 'Two' Nation strategies have worked in ways which no government planned. The manufacturing economy has certainly not emerged, phoenix-like, in a form making it competitive with other economies. Part of the reason for this is that the 'British' economy has, to a rapidly increasing extent, been dominated by multinational companies. The top 100 firms in Britain produced 22 per cent of output in 1949; they now account for over two thirds of output.¹⁰ This means that a central part of any national government strategy aimed at restoring a national economy is in fact trying to deal with organisations which are at liberty to invest anywhere: if necessary, out of Britain altogether.

At the same time as the manufacturing sector has declined, other sectors have increased in significance. Again important here has been the services sector, and in particular the sector concerned with financial services. Whilst manufacturing has declined, that part of the British economy known as 'the City' has been growing as an offshore island relatively detached from the industrial economy, but nevertheless exerting enormous influence on central government policy. Furthermore, this particular link between the British economy and the world market (with the pound as a reserve currency) has, time and again, reduced national governments' room for actually carrying through the kinds of strategy they have intended. It has left them crucially exposed to the demands of financial institutions with essentially global interests. Harold Wilson's now classic words to the Governor of the Bank of England on how the plans of a socialist government could not be countenanced by the City are worth re-quoting:

Not for the first time, I said that we had now reached the situation

where a newly-elected Government with a mandate from the people was being told, not so much by the Governor of the Bank of England but by international speculators, that the policies on which we had fought the election could not be implemented; that the Government was to be forced into the adoption of Tory policies to which it was fundamentally opposed. The Governor confirmed that that was in fact the case.¹¹

That was in 1964. The most recent and most spectacular example was in 1976 when the Labour government devalued the pound to revive the British economy. The devaluation, however, got out of hand. Three billion pounds was borrowed from the US Federal Reserve Bank and the International Monetary Fund, loans which were only made available on the understanding that plans for welfare spending (part of the Social Contract) were drastically reduced. In effect, an apparently financial problem was used by the IMF and the international banks as a way of forcing the Labour government into the kind of strategy later adopted by the Conservative Party. So whilst this looks at first like an 'international' or 'spatial' issue ('world banks versus Britain') it is primarily a political issue; one that could operate at any scale. As we'll see, the same applies when we come to look at recent confrontations between national and local governments in Britain.

The final point to emphasise is the extremely divisive nature of recent two nation strategies. I have already mentioned the increasing regional and sub-regional divisions in terms of employment (see table 1.1). These divisions have been exacerbated by other policies, especially those over council house sales. As Ray Forrest and Alan Murie's work has shown, the pattern of sales has been very uneven, with sales proceeding most rapidly in areas where council housing is already least common; the South East (excluding Greater London), East Anglia, East Midlands and Wales.¹²

More important, however, is how the two nation strategy has affected people rather than places. Table 5.1 is one of the most recent (and official) accounts of the effects of British monetarism. 'Original income' here is the money people make from their employment, occupational pensions and investments. 'Disposable Income' shows how original income is changed by additions in the form of retirement pensions, supplementary benefit and deductions in the form of taxes and National Insurance payments. 'Final Income' incorporates indirect taxes (such as VAT and rates) and adds the benefits to households which are estimated to result from government spending on welfare and other services such as education.

The table shows that since 1976 the distribution of total original income has become increasingly unequal. The share in 'Final Income' of the bottom 40 per cent has fallen one per cent while that of the top 20 per cent has increased by over one per cent. The tendency has been similar in the distribution of wealth, the share of the top 10 per cent of households

having increased over this period from 34 per cent to 35 per cent.

Table 5.1 UK Distribution of Original, Disposable and Final Household Income (Percentages)

	Quintile groups of households					
	Bottom fifth	Next fifth	Middle fifth	Next fifth	Top fifth	Total
Original income						
1976	0.8	9.4	18.8	26.6	44.4	100.0
1981	0.6	8.1	18.0	26.9	46.4	100.0
1982	0.4	7.1	18.2	27.2	47.1	100.0
1983	0.3	6.7	17.1	27.2	48.0	100.0
1984	0.3	6.1	17.5	27.5	48.6	100.0
Disposable income (after direct taxes)						
1976	7.0	12.6	18.2	24.1	38.1	100.0
1981	6.7	12.1	17.7	24.1	39.4	100.0
1982	6.8	11.8	17.6	24.2	39.6	100.0
1983	6.9	11.9	17.6	24.0	39.6	100.0
1984	6.7	11.7	17.5	24.4	39.7	100.0
Final income (after all taxes)						
1976	7.4	12.7	18.0	24.0	37.9	100.0
1981	7.1	12.4	17.9	24.0	38.6	100.0
1982	6.9	12.0	17.6	24.1	39.4	100.0
1983	6.9	12.2	17.6	24.0	39.3	100.0
1984	7.1	12.1	17.5	24.0	39.0	100.0

Source: *Social Trends* 1987 (London: HMSO), based on *Family Expenditure Survey*.

Classes, Politics and Localities

Meanwhile, what support have these national government strategies been receiving? How have social changes in Britain been affecting the country's politics? What is the significance of locality in these changes? During the post-war period there have been some extremely important changes in all these respects. And locality has assumed an ever-increasing significance.

'De-alignment' and the Role of the Service Class

It is often argued that a growing feature of contemporary British politics is 'class de-alignment'. The de-alignment thesis is that class has now lost much of its salience in British political life. Rising living standards, the spread of home-ownership and increased possibilities for social mobility

of working class people have, it is argued, increasingly blurred class boundaries and political allegiances. As regards working-class politics, the argument goes that manual workers have become increasingly divided; a process which has led to weakening support for the Labour Party. Evidence of de-alignment comes with figures showing declining support from manual and non-manual workers for both parties. For example, the percentage of manual workers voting Labour declined from 62 per cent in 1959 to 46 per cent in 1983. At the same time, the percentage of non-manual workers voting Conservative declined from 69 to 45 over the same period.¹³

There is, however, a persuasive counter-argument here. The 'de-alignment' thesis seriously overlooks recent changes in the kinds of jobs people do and changes in the British class structure during the post-war period. The underlying process may well be not so much de-alignment of the two main classes, but the rapid rise of a range of white-collar workers (lower-level white-collar workers doing relatively routine jobs as well as higher-level 'service-class' managers) combined with the continuing significance of people running small scale businesses. These changes, and their effects on politics, cannot be adequately understood by continuing to rely on a simple two-class ('manual' and 'non manual') analysis. Tables 5.2 and 5.3 shows the subtler kinds of broad social changes we have already outlined in earlier chapters, and the voting patterns of these groups in the 1983 general election.

Table 5.2
Britain's Changing Social Structure, 1964 and 1983 (percentage)

	1964	1983
Salariat (managers, administrators & professionals)	18	27
Routine non-manual (clerks, sales workers)	18	24
Petty bourgeoisie (proprietors, own account manual)	7	8
Foremen and technicians	10	7
Working class	47	34
	100%	100%

Source: A. Heath et al., *How Britain Votes*, Tables 2.1 and 2.3

This more subtle and graduated way of defining class positions allows us to get a better grip on the processes affecting Britain's changing political scene. Unsurprisingly, the salariat (the service class with relatively secure and well-paid jobs) is one of the mainstays of Tory support. On the other hand, as we'll discuss further in Chapter 6, the 1987 general election results show some important divisions to be opening up even within this group.¹⁴ Especially significant recently has been the turn from the

Conservative Party of the 'intelligentsia' (those who have been in higher education) and those working for the public sector. The 1983 results showed highest levels of support for the Tories from the 'petty bourgeoisie'; a diverse group, but one which has perhaps most to gain from a party which encourages individual enterprise and supports market forces unconstrained by trades unions and supposedly top-heavy state bureaucracies. Even here, however, there are some changes. Between 1983 and 1987 the Conservatives lost some support, for example, from Britain's farmers. The working class, now re-defined in a more precise way, is still giving about half its support to the Labour Party. On the other hand, both the 1983 and the 1987 results showed that many working class people were not voting Labour. Labour support tends to come from the 'traditional' working class (those, for example, living in council houses, those working in the public sector, those who are unionised) while the remainder (those, for example, in owner occupation, working in the private sector and non-unionised) are tending to maintain the Conservatives as their preferred party.

Table 5.3

Class and Vote in 1983: the Political Distinctiveness of Classes (percentage)

	Conservative	Labour	Alliance	Others
Salariat	54	14	31	1
Routine non-manual	46	25	27	2
Petty bourgeoisie	71	12	17	0
Foremen & technicians	48	26	25	1
Working class	30	49	20	1

Source: see Table 5.2

The arguments over the de-alignment or otherwise of British politics continue. Even the more sophisticated analyses of social and political change remain far from complete in some respects. For example, there is as yet little adequate understanding of women's political alignments. It seems clear that a long-standing gender gap in politics (women tending to vote Conservative) has now largely disappeared. It is also clear, however, that women have distinctive political alignments. Early analyses of the 1987 election results showed a six per cent shift by women towards Labour, this making their overall political alignments very similar to those of men. Younger women were particularly inclined to vote Labour; a result, perhaps of their specially close links to public sector welfare provision and schools. Women aged 18-24, for example, switched their allegiances by about eleven per cent compared with two per cent

amongst men of the same age-group.

There is, however, one feature of contemporary politics which is widely agreed on, even if the processes underlying it are a matter for continuing debate. And it is of special importance to us. We have frequently noted the importance of the 'the middle class' (and, more precisely, what we have called 'the service class' of managerial and upper-level white-collar workers) in restructuring of the economy and in patterns of community life. The significance of this rapidly-rising group becomes even greater when it comes to understanding contemporary politics. A number of recent studies have demonstrated that the presence of employers and managers in a constituency is, to an increasing extent during the post-war period, deeply affecting the political behaviour of their area. And this is happening to an extent which is quite disproportionate to their numbers in the locality. In other words, the service class is acting as a 'core' class in terms of affecting the rest of the population's political alignments.¹⁵

I will return to this 'neighbourhood effect' shortly. Before this, however, we need to outline briefly what has happened in terms of the changing geography of British politics. First, it seems that over time voting behaviour is becoming increasingly localised, the main dimensions being the North-South and urban-rural split. For over 30 years now there has been a movement towards Labour in the North, Scotland and most urban areas and towards the Conservatives in the rest of England and most rural areas. Before 1955 swings in voting behaviour tended to be relatively uniform over Britain as a whole. The North-South polarisation was, as we saw in Chapter 3, a particularly clear feature of the 1987 election. But, as Tables 5.4 and 5.5 show, this, and the urban-rural split, have long been developing during the post-war period.

As regards regional polarisation, the South of England and Wales both swung towards the Conservatives between 1955 and 1970 whilst even at this early stage Scotland and the North of England were swinging towards Labour. This polarisation continued between 1970 and 1979 (boundary changes necessitating a separate table for this period) although during these years there was in fact a swing towards the Conservatives in the North of England. On the other hand, this swing was very small and considerably less than the average for Britain as a whole. The regional division continued with the 1983 election. At this stage, however, a division started to open up between the Midlands and the South of England. In Chapter 3 we discussed the processes and management-labour relations underlying the withdrawal of capital from this region and the consequent devastation of the old, less 'flexible', Midlands economy. Table 5.5 shows some of the electoral implications of these processes. The Midlands and the South generally swung together between 1955 and 1979, but the Midlands swing towards the Conservatives was less than that of the South in 1983. Early results from the 1987 election show a similar

Table 5.4 Local Variation in British Politics: Mean Swing (change in Conservative share of combined Conservative and Labour vote) 1955-79, by Region and Rurality

1955-70: Overall UK swing, 0.09 to the Conservatives

	South and Midlands	North	Wales	Scotland	Mean
City	-1.93	-7.51		-9.53	-3.92
Very Urban	+0.08	-5.60	-4.55	-9.02	-2.78
Mainly Urban	+1.19	-2.09	-4.47	-6.81	-1.08
Mixed	+3.01	-0.22	-4.16	-5.74	+0.40
Mainly Rural	+3.59	-1.35	-5.16	-2.06	+2.17
Very Rural	+4.97	+1.29	+0.42	-1.40	+1.68
Mean	+1.21	-2.98	+2.89	-5.62	-0.98

1970-9: Overall UK swing, +2.44 to the Conservatives

City	+0.24	-4.74		-8.12	-1.98
Very Urban	+1.48	-1.81	+1.45	-7.15	-0.28
Mainly Urban	+4.26	-0.60	+2.42	-4.22	+1.67
Mixed	+6.24	+2.77	+6.17	-2.17	+4.48
Mainly Rural	+7.87	+3.75	+10.49	+0.31	+6.27
Very Rural	+8.82	+7.99	+15.16	+4.03	+8.45
Mean	+4.24	+0.10	+7.60	-2.84	+2.49

Source: J. Curtice, M. Steed, 'Electoral choice and the production of government: the changing operation of the electoral system in the United Kingdom since 1955', *British Journal of Political Science* (July 1982).

Table 5.5 Swing by Region and Urban-Rural types, 1979-83

	South	Midlands	Wales	North	Scotland	Mean
Rural	+9.2	+11.0	+9.0	+5.9	+6.8	+8.8
Mixed	+10.6	+7.8	+2.0	+5.1	+2.0	+7.0
Mainly Urban	+9.7	+6.9	+4.8	+2.8	-0.8	+5.5
Very Urban	+5.3	+1.8	+7.6	+0.3	-2.5	+3.0
All	+8.3	+6.9	+4.5	+3.1	+2.2	+5.9

Source: J. Curtice, M. Steed, 'Appendix 2: an analysis of the voting' in D. Butler, D. Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1983* (London: Macmillan, 1984).

pattern: a swing towards Labour compared with the South, though with Conservatives picking up some support, this time largely as a result of desertions from the Alliance parties.

As regards the polarisation between urban and rural areas, there has been, as Table 5.5 shows, a consistent tendency for the most urban areas to swing to Labour and the most rural areas to swing towards the Conservatives. The latter have of course particularly benefited from the invasion of the owner-occupying service class. ('Urban' and 'rural' here are defined by numbers of electors per hectare.) Labour's support is therefore becoming increasingly entrenched in its urban heartlands and support for the Conservatives comes from the rural areas; a picture confirmed by the maps of the 1987 election results in Chapter 1. An extreme example of this urban-rural polarisation is again the Midlands. Whilst in 1983 the swing towards the Conservatives in the 'very urban' Midlands areas was small (1.8 per cent) the swing towards the Conservatives in the rural areas (11.0 per cent) was the highest in the country.

There have always been spatial variations in political allegiances and voting behaviour; but it seems that spatial variations are now coming about for different reasons; primarily the industrial and social changes, and their spatial impacts, that we discussed earlier. Thirty years or so ago large cities such as Liverpool, Birmingham and London had large working-class populations, but this did not mean that they all voted Labour. Whereas parts of inner London such as the docklands were indeed at the centre of the British labour movement, Liverpool was, for example, famed for its working class Orangeism and weak labour movement while Birmingham has long had a tradition of working class Conservatism. Now, partly as a result of central state intervention, local cultural and political traditions have declined. The Labour Party is crucially dependent on all inner-city areas for its support.

Paradoxically, however, for all this 'nationalisation of British politics', there have also been increasing variations in political alignments and voting patterns. Labour, as we have seen, has not done too badly in the North and the inner-city areas while the Conservative Party has been thriving in the South of England and the rural areas. The reasons for these comparatively recent geographical variations in voting behaviour have been the subject of much speculation and debate by political and social scientists.¹⁶

One obvious explanation of the increasing regional and urban-rural divisions is that they simply reflect the changing geography of social class. The divisions seem to accelerate at around the time of intensive counter-urbanisation in the 1960s, the period when Britain's 'new spatial division of labour' was beginning to open up; managerial classes being increasingly concentrated in the South East and production workers in

Britain's more peripheral regions. However, this is not an adequate explanation since, as I have mentioned before, the number of managers and employers living in an area appear to be having a disproportionate effect on that area's voting patterns.

Politics, the Middle Classes and the Neighbourhood Effect

We started discussing earlier the importance of class in affecting an individual's politics. It's the specific *social context* in which individuals form their politics which is critically important in explaining support for political parties. This, incidentally, is a point we will pick up and develop in the next chapter.

The importance of social context means we cannot easily predict people's politics and voting behaviour on the basis of their class or tenure position alone. Instead, we need to fully appreciate their relationships to other classes and social groups where they are living. This is especially important in understanding the politics of working-class people. They in particular appear (the word 'appear' is, as I will explain later, important) to be voting against their class interests if they live close to large numbers of service class people such as managers and professionals. These variations are important. In 1983, for example, 61 per cent of working class people voted Labour in working class electoral wards, but only 23 per cent in middle-class wards. Forty-one per cent voted Conservative in working-class wards and 60 per cent in 'salaried', predominantly middle-class wards.

Why should this be? This brings us to a critical point in this book and our attempt to link the different kinds of change in work relations and civil society to changing forms of politics.

There has in fact been considerable discussion over what is causing this 'locality effect' in contemporary British politics. No single and conclusive answer has been established, though some answers are more persuasive than others.

One explanation is that upper-level white collar people are having a 'contagion effect' on other classes of people. As we saw in the last chapter, there is arguably a tendency for those working class people who live near to middle class housing estates to have more middle class friends and associates. Such friendships could lead to working class people adopting values and politics similar to those living nearby; a process which would not take place if the 'same' working class individuals lived in a predominantly working class area. These informal links could be further strengthened if, for example, individuals from a wide range of occupational backgrounds belonged to the same area-based voluntary associations. Such a process, 'core classes' becoming widely involved in a wide range of local voluntary associations and institutions, does (as we saw in the last chapter) take place. Furthermore, something of this kind

seems also to be happening on the left, the 'new urban left' (containing a high proportion of service class professionals) articulating particular kinds of demands on behalf of the working class in their area. This is a point we'll return to shortly.

This local community life, with the middle classes engaging in many forms of associational activities, may well be one explanation of the neighbourhood effect. On the other hand, it is difficult to imagine how informal association of this type could be the sole process involved and have such pervasive (and persuasive) effects on individuals whose material circumstances (levels of pay, value of domestic property and so forth) are so different. Furthermore, although middle-class people may be community 'leaders' there is actually rather little evidence that voluntary associations also attract large numbers of individuals from other occupational backgrounds.

There are other versions of the 'contagion' argument. One is that an area with a large number of employers is likely to be an area in which there are large numbers of small firms. In small firms, it is sometimes argued, there is a greater tendency for employers and employees to be mixed together and for paternalistic relations to emerge out of these close working relationships. So an area in which there are reasonably large numbers of employers could well also be an area in which the working class will be comparatively under-unionised and politically passive. Another argument is that working-class individuals, by merely living in a middle-class locality, are somehow soaking up middle-class values. Even without regularly meeting employers and middle-class people they so regularly encounter Barbour jackets, Perrier water and Golf GTI's that they turn into middle class people by a form of cultural osmosis. Again, there may be some value in this theory, but the processes are again rather too tenuous to explain why the 'neighbourhood effect' recurs so regularly. Indeed, in the case of this last 'cultural osmosis' theory, it could be argued that proximity of poor to rich people could have precisely the opposite effect; radicalising the poor as much as turning them into respectable citizens.

To gain a firmer grasp of the reasons for increasing local variation in political alignments we need to turn to some of the other factors we have discussed earlier, especially the forms and levels of employment in an area and local variations in house prices. If we consider these factors, then employers and managers are less important for their 'contagion effects' and much more important for their economic effects on an area. The Mass Observers illustrated some of the processes at work here. What seems to be happening is that people are quite closely monitoring their local area in terms of the jobs available, the value of house prices and the state of various forms of public provision such as the health service or the cost of council housing. They are assessing their own circumstances, developing their own politics and voting accordingly. They are voting, in other

words, for local and national government strategies which they see as being most appropriate to deal with the particular combination of circumstances in their areas. Incidentally, the media (which tend to be nationally or internationally based) must have a key role here in influencing peoples' perceptions and actions.

So the apparently mysterious 'neighbourhood effect' can be explained in the following way. A working-class owner-occupier standing to make big capital gains in an affluent area may well support the Conservative Party, assuming he or she sees the future of the area in an optimistic way and sees a Conservative government (and its encouragement of market processes) as the best way of maintaining a good economic position. But the 'same' owner occupier in a region such as the Midlands which has seen a decline in the local economy and in house prices may well see extensive state intervention as the best way of catching up with the rest of the nation, this being a plausible reason for voting Labour. In both cases, of course, the competing parties are at the same time active in forming programmes for their localities by incorporating some issues and not others into their strategies. We should note here that a similar process seems to operate for both national and local government elections. In both cases people are voting for parties which they see as protecting or enhancing their material interests, the much higher turn-out in national elections being a reflection of the fact that the electorate (correctly) sees national government as far more influential in affecting job opportunities, levels of public provision and house prices.

At the level of the individual decision-maker we have met a number of examples of choices (stemming from particular local combinations of circumstances) for particular national political programmes. Let me briefly offer two other, perhaps more extreme, examples. One is the case of the owner-occupying miner in South Wales. Despite the fact that the majority of these people are owner-occupiers, state intervention in their local economy (dominated by steel and coal) has long seemed the best way of keeping their jobs and protecting the capital value of their houses. Take, on the other hand, a much better-off middle-class owner occupier in a gentrified area of inner city London; the proverbial 'yuppy'. Such a person too may see more public spending (particularly on roads, education and welfare provision) as providing the best way of sustaining the economic rewards he or she deserves.

So we now have a more adequate understanding of the 'neighbourhood effect'. First, and probably most important, we need to see it in terms of the shared conditions of people's lives. We saw in Chapter 3 the processes underlying the loss of jobs in the 'old' regions and urban areas. These are the areas with the oldest plants, the oldest production processes and the oldest (and least productive) forms of management-labour relations. We can now see the political fallout of these changes. Curtice and Steed

explain the national variations in political alignments in the following way:

To a considerable extent, the North-South and urban-rural difference correspond with the variation in the post-war distribution of economic well-being in Britain. The North of England and Scotland have generally had higher levels of unemployment in the post-war era than most of the South and Midlands. Similarly, inner-city areas tend to have higher levels of unemployment than the surrounding hinterland.¹⁷

Voters are, as a result of these changes to the economic fortunes of their areas, voting for the party which they see as most likely to restore the fortunes of their localities. This is a quite logical process and it helps explain why, unless we look at the spatial context in which their politics are formed, working class people appear to be voting against their 'real' interests. Curtice and Steed outline the process of the evaluation of specific circumstances as the main process underlying support for Labour:

Finding time and again that an upward turn in the trade cycle does not solve the economic problems of their area, voters of all classes in the relatively disadvantaged parts of Britain may gradually have been led to transfer their support to Labour. Since the Labour Party evidently has greater commitment to governmental intervention in the economy, in particular to regional policy and politics which help the inner cities, such behaviour has a political logic.

Second, the effect fits in quite well with what we know about the relationships between social groups in localities; specifically the tendency for middle class groups to act as a kind of economic and cultural vanguard in neighbourhood life. This influence may be spread through formal political channels. Equally important, however, are networks of semi-political associational life.

The environmental pressure groups discussed in the last chapter are a good example of both kinds of influence. A contrasting case involves the so-called 'new urban left'. In this case a socially and politically distinct section of the service class (incorporating, in particular, middle-level public-sector employees) has for some time been gaining increased influence in the old heartlands of the Labour movement. Such influence is being achieved in many of the deindustrialising urban centres, but perhaps most headway has been made in some of the inner London boroughs. The old docklands are a case in point. One of these is Bermondsey where, for 35 years, Bob Mellish was the Labour MP. His outrage against the growing impact of the new radical middle classes is a symptom of the neighbourhood effect in his area. In this case, however,

the effect is one of a 'left' variety.

A group of people have turned up on my management committee that I've never seen or heard of before. Students, NUPE members, people like that. They want to pick the Party leader, they want to decide Party policy, they insist on the reselection of MPs. I told them to stuff it.¹⁸

Mellish's aggravation is perhaps understandable. On the other hand, it underestimates the shift in influence away from the older East labour movement and towards the public sector unions. Members of the National Union of Public Employees are not socially or politically peripheral; their union is the fourth largest in Britain.

As regards the neighbourhood effect more generally, perhaps the most important thing to remember is the tendency for political influences between classes to operate in one direction. The voting behaviour of working-class individuals and households is, it seems, especially influenced by the politics of the middle classes in their areas. The politics of the middle or 'service' class, by contrast, are much less influenced by the alignments of the working-class in their constituencies.

These are some of the class effects on a constituency's political alignment. What about gender effects? Unfortunately the evidence is much more schematic and the research has still to be done. It seems clear, however, that many of the stereotypes surrounding the woman voter are unjustified. There is, for example, little evidence that women are more politically passive than men. Nor are they especially likely to follow the voting behaviour of their husbands or vote Conservative simply on the grounds of their sex. Women's political alignments do seem to differ from those of men in some distinctive ways. For men, the biggest political divisions (judging from those who vote Labour and those who vote Conservative) are between non-manual workers and controllers of labour. For women, however, an even bigger gap is between manual workers and non-manual workers. Dunleavy and Husbands argue that non-manual housewives are amongst the most Conservative of all groups, while manual-worker housewives are much more inclined to Labour. A large part of this female manual-worker support to Labour comes from women in households where one member is not working (63 per cent of women in this category voting Labour in 1983); a result of the fact, Dunleavy and Husbands suggest, that women in these circumstances are more dependent on welfare services and consequently more vulnerable to cuts in this type of public spending.

Again, the early analyses of the 1987 general election showed a disproportionate four per cent swing amongst women voters towards the Labour Party. This perhaps reflected Labour's emphasis on welfare provision, although it is just as arguable that it reflected their policies towards investment in jobs and disarmament.

Class and gender politics intersect in rather complex ways. While we can still argue that middle class households are highly influential in terms of constituency politics, we need to remain specially sensitive to the distinctive demands of women; especially those for increased public sector provision. Such demands might be expected to cross class boundaries. The evidence is, however, that the divisions are more amongst working class women (manual and non-manual) than between working class women on the one hand and the small number of female employers and managers on the other. The evidence, however, is not very strong; the study of women's political alignments still being, in line with dominant social attitudes, a marginalised part of political science.

While we can argue that the service class is especially influential in local political alignments, there are two additional things to say about the form this influence takes. Until quite recently the middle classes have not themselves frequently engaged in local politics as councillors. This is a result, perhaps, of the fact that they have in the past tended to be relatively mobile and therefore not fully involved in an area's social, cultural and political life. More recently, however, the 'new urban left' (part of the middle class which, as we will see in the next chapter, has become less mobile) has started to get more involved in local politics.

This brings us to the more important second point; the relationships between the politics of the dominant service class and the political demands being made by subordinate social groups. On the one hand, we would be wrong to suggest that this group's politics is highly cohesive. Even when its members do assume positions of political power this does not of course stop them forging political alliances around, for example, strategies of substantial public-sector intervention to deal with unemployment or confronting issues which cross class boundaries altogether. There remain, however, considerable tensions between these middle-class groups and the 'lower' groups they are supposed to be representing. Middle class articulation of, say, gay rights, women's rights and discrimination against blacks is arguably not the priority for, say, working-class people living in decaying public sector housing. Nor is active middle-class concern for any of these subordinate groups the same thing as handing over social and political power to them. The opposite side to the middle class domination of local politics is a brand of locally-based politics which may well reject the ideas and values of the dominant social orders and may indeed have rather little to do with the formal political system.

The Second Nation, the Recovery of Community and 'The British Society Question'

So far we have been concerned mainly with those groups of people (in employment and benefiting from being owner-occupiers) who, in broad

terms, represent the mainstream of British political and social life. There are, of course, other people who are clearly not part of this mainstream. For these groups of people 'locality' (in both a physical and social sense) has a particular significance.

They can be seen as constituting the second of Britain's 'two nations': those at the opposite end of the spectrum from the dominant service class. Particularly important here are young, working class, groups; white as well as black. On the one hand they have been amongst the hardest-hit by the processes of industrial restructuring and social changes that we have been discussing. They have often been excluded from paid employment. At best, their work is in the least secure and dead-end jobs in peripheral sub-contracting companies or in the labour-intensive 'service' sectors. They have often been left behind by the more skilled, better paid workers. It is worth noting here that recent research on the rise of the racist National Front has shown that the supporters of the movement have suffered from many of the same processes of industrial restructuring and neighbourhood decline as the black people. The key difference is, of course, that they attribute the collapse of jobs, house prices and welfare-provision not to industrial decline and government neglect but to the continuing presence of blacks themselves.¹⁹

The 'leaving behind' of the marginal people takes a spatial as well as a social form. The better-off workers go to live in the suburbs and in their own homes. Meanwhile, those on the margin still live in those inner areas of British cities which, so far, have not been 'gentrified' by middle-class households.

As members of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) have shown, one response by those groups who have been marginalised in these ways is to attempt a 'winning back' of their territorial and cultural identity. They attempt to organise an alternative life elsewhere, though the 'alternative' often has a mundane familiarity about it:

For most kids where it's at is the street; not the romantic action packed streets of the ghetto but the wet pavements of Wigan, Shepherds Bush and Sunderland. The main activity in this venue, the main action of British subculture is, in fact, 'doing nothing'. It is in fact the 'weird idea' that represents the major something about 'doing nothing'. In fighting boredom the kids choose the street not as a wonderfully lively place, rather they look on it as the place where there is the most chance that something will happen. Doing nothing on the street must be compared with the alternatives: for example, knowing that nothing will happen with Mum and Dad in the front room; being almost certain that the youth club will be full of boredom. This makes the street the place where something might just happen, if not this Saturday, then surely next.²⁰

Working-class youth, CCCS argue, try to construct a separate, collectively-organised and locally based, social life. They are partly successful. On the other hand, they remain socially constrained; by Mum and Dad, by local property owners and, if all else fails, by the police.

For black people linked with to Rastafarianism the reconstruction of an alternative imaginary community (in the form of an African paradise on earth) is perhaps even more important. The second generation of West Indians, Cashmore argues, see their parents fooling themselves by thinking they will ever be treated as equals in a white society. The answer is to set up a new kind of society separate from white racism: 'With no tangible hope of improvement they formulated a rough calculus and concluded that their parents were sadly misguided, hopelessly deluded or simply duped by society into accepting an erroneous belief. Rastafari was a rectifying theme.'²¹

Recent work on race and on the 1981 and 1985 'riots' also emphasise the 'winning back of community' theme. On the one hand, the police see many inner urban areas as a threat, containing young and black people who constitute a challenge to the public order which it is the job of the police to uphold. As Sir Kenneth Newman, the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police put it in 1983:

Throughout London there are locations where unemployed youth – often black youth – congregate; where the sale and purchase of drugs, the exchange of stolen property and illegal drinking and gaming is not uncommon. The youths regard these locations as their territory. Police are viewed as intruders, the symbol of authority – largely white authority – in a society that is responsible for all their grievances about unemployment, prejudice and discrimination. They equate closely with the rookeries of Dickensian London.²²

At the same time, the disruptive street protests of 1981 and 1985 were in large part an attempt to re-establish community and identity; a re-assertion of popular control over a locality which had been repeatedly invaded. As Gilroy puts it:

Where community members saw their authority over their own history and experience being undermined, the right to control their streets and the representation of them in the media was forcefully demanded.²³

At this point, however, we must recall how dominant social groups (and nationally-based politicians) tend to re-emphasise the unifying theme of 'the nation'. It is instructive, for example, to see how the mass circulation and nationally-based newspapers, even though sometimes calling for a deeper understanding of what caused the street riots, still place great

emphasis on the difference and distance between the respectable 'us' (the nation as a whole) and the supposedly subversive mobs and hooligans who live in bad conditions and engage in riots. In this way marginal groups are used to generate great national anxieties, or what CCCS call 'moral panics', about not only the rioters themselves but about the state of the nation as a whole and institutions such as the family and the school. Such panics in turn become in turn a justification for even more coercive state intervention. Here is the editorial of *The Mirror* (a paper broadly supportive of the national Labour Party) on 11 September 1985, the day after the uprising in Handsworth, Birmingham.

THE WITCH'S BREW

Why did they riot? Why did they kill? Why did they thief, knife and loot?

What made a mob of youths go on a wrecking rampage, destroying, terrorising and burning?

There is no single or simple answer.

Unemployment is high in Handsworth, but so it is elsewhere. Over three million people, black and white, are out of work but they do not riot. Bad housing? Every town and city has it.

Copying South Africa? But conditions here at their worst, are better than in South Africa.

Drugs? In some cases, yes. But not all.

There may be a witch's brew of reasons. But nothing excuses hooliganism which leads to murder. Nothing justifies petrol bombs. Nothing can explain attacks on firemen. Nothing can make arson and looting defensible.

The danger now is imitation, as happened after the riots of 1981. If it occurs, the police will – must – put it down, using whatever force is necessary.

But there is an even greater danger. That, like 1981, the answer will be an inquiry and not much else.

Though immediately we may not identify the causes they exist. The Government must discover them, and having discovered them make sure that they are eliminated.

Threats in the form of locally-rooted social movements proposing alternatives to the wider, and nationally-based, social order are not however limited to violent protest or to the demands of black and young people. The same kinds of challenge are being made through the formal democratic process. As we will now see, they nevertheless still generate

substantial 'moral panics' and firm national government responses. More subtly, however, they are constantly subject to various forms of middle class influence and incorporation.

Central-Local Government Relations: the Underlying Agenda

Over the period we have been discussing there have emerged some quite new social movements and demands on political parties. Those involving black and young people are a case in point. The demands of women are another. A feature of what Lash and Urry call 'disorganised capitalism' is the growth of a range of social movements which are not based solely on the demands made by classes in paid work (capital and labour) but by groups whose demands are outside the sphere of employment. It is, however, a moot point whether these movements are wholly new. In the case of the women's movement at least we are perhaps really dealing with demands which have long been made but which (perhaps as a result of more women being incorporated into the workforce) have only recently been recognised by political parties.

Anti-sexism, anti-racism, environmentalism and the peace movement are amongst the most important developments here. Bearing in mind, however, our earlier discussion of the importance of jobs and housing for national politics, we should not overemphasise these movements as completely separate from people's more 'traditional' concerns. It's above all the *combination* of the newer and older forms of politics, stemming from people's varied experiences in particular places, which should be our main interest.

One of the common features of these new forms of politics has been the questioning of state power itself. As Lash and Urry put it:

The national state which was once seen by women as necessary to ensure that, for example, local councils were forced to provide decent welfare facilities is now very much viewed as the problem rather than the solution, and this has now become more the case as 'the state, violence and sexuality' become centrally salient issues in the contemporary movement.²⁴

A similar point can be made about racism and anti-racism. As I'll be discussing in more detail shortly, more important than the question of how it has or has not been accommodated through the democratic process is the extent to which the struggle against racism is not being fought out through the ballot box at all. As with the women's movement, the state and its representatives (especially the police) are again seen as the problem as much as the solution. Finally, many within the ecology and the peace

movements would again see the state itself as the enemy. For them governments, far from being keepers of the peace, are themselves an intrusion and a threat to social order.

These movements contain strong 'local versus national' elements. The ecology movement, emphasising production for need rather than profit, gives particular emphasis to decentralisation and democratic rather than hierarchical control over production and the use of resources.

The elements of the peace movement are, as Lash and Urry argue:

overwhelmingly *local*, they consist of *forming* real bonds and developing shared objectives and common programmes with those close by and which do not involve setting up and running large hierarchically organised bureaucracies. The strength of the peace movement and the formation of these *resistant* public spheres is primarily local. Indeed, the number of groups in CND rose from 150 in 1979 to a staggering 1,100 in 1984.²⁵

The new social movements propose, then, various forms of de-centralised alternative strategies. It could be a mistake, however, to over-emphasise localism in all these emergent forms of social movement. Experience of environmental threat does not automatically translate into social movements which are locally-based. It is certainly true to say that CND's strength lies in its dispersed local groupings, although there are now moves to establish stronger regional organisations. Greenpeace, by contrast, remains relatively centralised, the leadership's argument being that a strong central organisation is necessary to create policy and carry out co-ordinated actions on a worldwide basis. The apparent contradiction of a centralist environmental movement is still, however, a matter of lively debate within the movement itself. There are broader issues here over the limits of localism which we will discuss in Chapter 6.

Any attempt to explain how these new kinds of social movement have come about must pay particular attention to local social systems and, once more, to the role of women. We saw earlier the extent to which experience and daily associations revolve around 'community' or, more specifically, around the home and children as well as around paid employment. The two Mass Observers in the last chapter illustrated this well. It comes as little surprise to find that the new forms of politics outside paid work are to a much greater extent supported and organised by women. Public opinion polls have shown, for example, that women are more in favour of nuclear disarmament than men and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament has more women members than men.²⁶ Part of any explanation may be the form of many women's daily experience and the fact that formal employment represents just a small element of their lives. Here, for example, is Alison Whyte:

The reasons which many women give for being involved in the peace movement are for the sake of their children and families and to ensure that they have a future. Those women who have not come into the peace movement through feminism in many cases have responded to the hardships which they and their children are experiencing as a direct result of military spending... Many women feel the pinch of spending on warfare, not welfare, directly: in reduced nursery facilities, axed school meals and low family allowances.²⁷

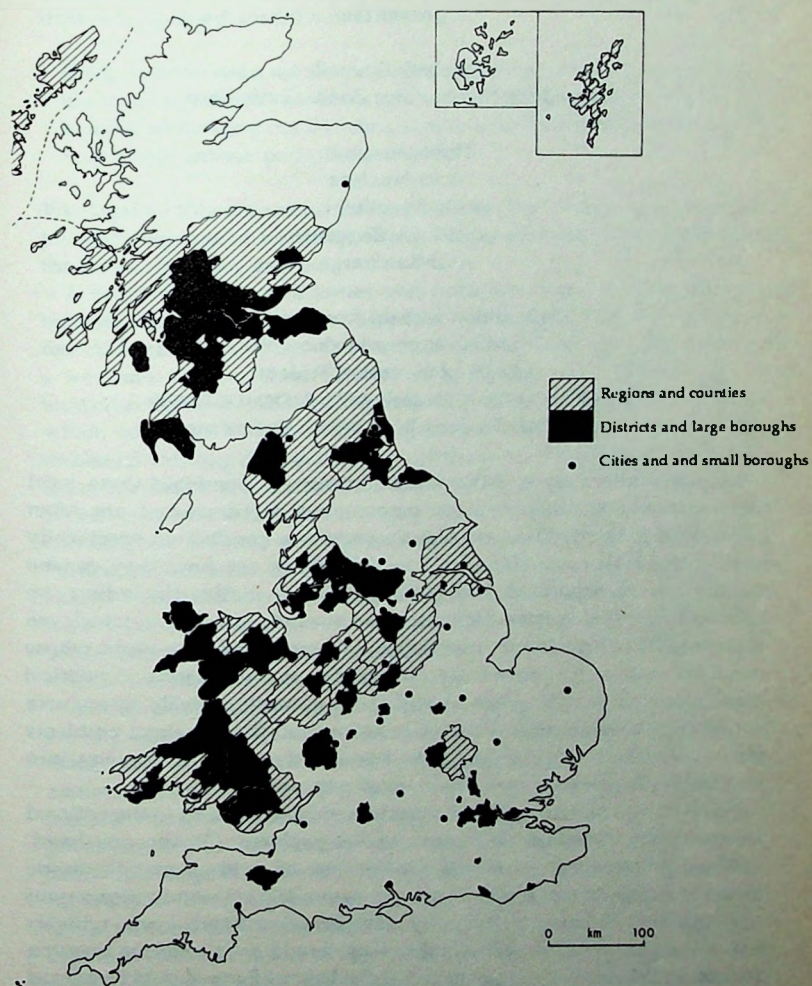
We have already seen an example of this with the West Country Mass Observer. As she put it: 'I'd rather have big hospitals than big bombs.' There is, however, a more general point I have made earlier in relation to women's political alignments. It seems at first sensible to suggest that women's politics are a straightforward reflection of their routines (for example, their more partial involvement in paid work and their more regular confrontation with children's welfare). The problem is, however, that it is a view which separates women from their class positions. It is, again, the middle classes (in this case middle class women) who are tending to be those most actively engaging in this kind of activity.

Bearing in mind our earlier emphasis on the service class, we should stress here that these new movements are most actively developed by the more professionalised parts of 'the new urban left', living in the inner urban, de-industrialising Labour Party heartlands. It is mainly in these contexts that the new kinds of alliance between the women's movement and the peace movement are being constructed.

One of the most spectacular examples (and one which has spread well beyond the best-known Left Wing councils) has been the establishment by over 180 local authorities of 'Nuclear Free Zones'. As Map 5.1 shows, a large number of regions and boroughs are now actively defying (often with the backing of the white collar public sector unions) central government's instructions to create war plans and war headquarters. Clearly, a small-scale nuclear-free zone makes no sense in a nuclear war, but these campaigns (which are relatively inexpensive to mount) are partly aimed at contrasting central government spending cuts and the decline of state welfare provision with the rise of national government defence spending.

The London Borough of Lambeth is a council which has made this point in a particularly assertive way. Below is their advertisement in CND's *Sanity* (November 1985). It links resistance to anti-national government defence strategy with resistance to a whole range of other national government policies. These include public spending cuts, the limiting of local rate rises and the surcharging of councillors in 'overspending' authorities. The advertisement also takes the opportunity of lambasting national government for failing to counter racism in South Africa. Inadvertently, however, the advertisement also underlines how, in the

Map 5.1 Nuclear-free zones, 1987



Source: CND

absence of real economic and political power, oppositional local authorities are placed on the defensive over all these issues.

LAMBETH

Lambeth Council
hosted the Nuclear Free Zones Conference

This borough is:
Anti-Nuclear
Anti-Apartheid
Anti-Rate Capping
Anti-Surcharge

£113 million withheld from Lambeth
by Central Government since 1979.....
just 1% of the cost of Trident

WORKING FOR JOBS AND LOCAL DEMOCRACY
Lambeth Services Well Worth Defending

Despite the tendency of the middle classes to dominate these local social movements, they still cut across class divisions and are often diffusely organised. They are also frequently a product of specifically *local* social relations. As such, it is difficult to see how they can be successfully incorporated into nationally-based parties (including the Labour Party) which have been designed around class issues, which are constituted by formal and complex bureaucratic procedures and whose members may well remain unsympathetic to the new kinds of political demands. It is one thing for some Labour councils actively to endorse anti-sexism, anti-racism and the peace movement. But some real problems start when the attempt is made to transfer this kind of strategy into national-level politics which, again, need mass support.

The arguments surrounding the creation of black sections in the national Labour Party illustrate the nature of the problem. On the one hand, national political leaders remain (at the time of writing) unenthusiastic about creating black sections on the grounds that semi-autonomous organisations threaten party unity. On the other hand, black activists themselves are divided over whether they should even continue pressing for black sections. One argument is that the Labour Party should be seen as just one element in a wider struggle against racism and, for all the party's faults, the demand for black sections should continue to be made. As regards racism and bureaucracy in the party, this argument goes, the objective should be to change them also; making them more more relevant to black people's needs. The opposite argument is that black sections in a

national party cannot adequately reflect the demands of the black people in struggle in actual communities and workplaces. Sivanandan outlines yet another sense in which the middle-classes reinterpret the demands of their marginalised constituents.

Black sections were not thrown up in the course of Black struggle... they are not organic to the Black movement. Black sections consist of a handful of aspiring middle-class people who have been blocked in their way to the Labour party hierarchy.²⁸

The logic of this argument is separatist, the best way forward for black people being to steer well clear of parties and continue the struggle outside the formal political process.

A rather similar set of issues and debates surrounds the relationship between the national Labour Party and the women's movement, although one difference here is that the National Executive of the party does have a women's section. Nevertheless, the argument put forward by many women activists is that the party retains a strong male and class bias; one which continues to reflect the requirements of a male, industrial and unionised working class and, again, not the concerns and demands (such as those for better welfare-provision) of many women. This complaint is reflected in recent research on the presence of local authority women's committees.²⁹ These are almost wholly associated with local Labour Parties. On the other hand, they are more difficult to establish in the old Labour industrial heartlands (requiring large numbers of active women to make them succeed) and easier to get established in areas where 'the new urban left' (including more middle-class, professional and well-paid women workers) is reasonably well established.

As this latter example suggests, the challenge for the Labour Party, as for any national party or coalition, is how to combine strategy for the newer, and locally-based, demands with older priorities, such as reviving manufacturing industry. The latter, with its demands for finance and possible changes to the law, inevitably involves a high degree of *national* government intervention. Indeed, even national governments with the ability to change the laws and raise large sums of money, have enormous difficulties in trying to control institutions such as multinational companies and the City of London. On the other hand, this very centralism begins to contradict some of the demands of the new forms of politics. To put the challenge rather differently: how does a national government or party (one which has considerable economic and legal powers enabling it to restructure manufacturing and counter the monetarist demands of the City of London) coexist with the emergent, distinctive and highly diverse demands such as those from environmentalists, women and black people? There are some important general strategy issues which we will discuss later.

Before coming to the future, however, we must consider current conflicts within and between parties. These struggles are not so much about party politics or local or national democracy *per se*. They are again primarily about the relations between classes, genders and races and the spatially uneven development of these relations.

Recent Developments: Class, Gender, Public Sector Workers and Localities

During the 1970s and 1980s the relationship between national and local government became regular headline news. The issue has not always attracted such interest. Local government previously received only spasmodic and localised attention, examples being the period of the 1974 local government reforms or the isolated struggles during the 1960s and early 1970s between local authorities and residents over slum clearance and the failures of high rise housing.

National-local relations actually started to emerge as an issue during the period of the 1974-9 Labour government. Recurring balance of payments problems and intense pressure in 1976 from the International Monetary Fund led this government to make the first serious attempt to restrict local authority spending. It was in 1976 that Anthony Crosland, the minister in charge of local government, issued his famous dictum 'the party's over'. Many at the time thought the party had hardly begun and, as I shall be arguing in this chapter, it in fact continued for some – but not others.

It was, however, during the period of the Conservative governments under Margaret Thatcher that the issue of local-central government relations surfaced as a major political and constitutional issue. This was particularly triggered off by the 1980 Local Government, Planning and Land Act, the 1980 Housing Act and, in 1985, the abolition of the Greater London Council and the Metropolitan County Councils.

The legislative programme of the 1987 Conservative Government now looks set to exacerbate the conflict between national and local government. Indeed, many of the central elements of the government's proposals are specifically aimed at undermining just those elements of local government (including the public sector workers) who do not share the centre's enthusiasm for the freedoms to individuals offered by market forces. The underlying philosophy is to bypass just such groups and to restore liberation in the form of consumer choice.

The dramatic proposal to replace domestic rates with a Community Charge is a case in point. It is intended, subject to some exemptions, that this should be paid by all adults and that a closer link should thereby be made between those paying the charge and the councils who are spending their money. Clearly, the objective is to make a high spending local authority more accountable to its constituents. Furthermore, a national

business rate will be administered *centrally*. Councils that have in the past charged high business rates will now receive back from the centre a much smaller proportion of the national business rate than under the old system of locally-raised business revenue. Assuming they wish to retain their previous revenue, this will in turn oblige local authorities to increase their community charge.

Again, the Conservatives' education plans include parents and schools allocating their own funds (distributed mainly from the centre, but with extra charges to parents) and removing the authority over education held by local authorities and public sector workers. A further example of the attack on local authorities combined with increased emphasis on market forces is the proposal to allow local authority tenants to choose landlords other than councils.

In many respects these conflicts between national and local government can be seen quite straightforwardly as a political outcome of the processes of uneven spatial development we have described earlier. In one corner we have a series of (mainly Labour) local authorities representing the most deprived areas and regions of the country and struggling to regain control over their own strategies, especially those connected with public spending. In the opposite corner we have a radical right-wing government pursuing a hard-line monetarist economic strategy and in league with interests such as big business and the City of London. National government appears as the victor; successfully cutting public spending, removing local opposition and restricting local autonomy and local democracy.

However, whilst there are certainly elements of the truth in all this, it again does not adequately reflect reality. First, as many people recognise, the real struggle was not, and is still not, simply about public spending. Second, while it is certainly true to say an underlying issue was (and is) ideological and political, even this interpretation offers only a partial view. Third, local autonomy has not in fact been destroyed in the dramatic sense that some of the more extreme rhetoric suggests.

The recent commotions surrounding national-local government has actually been about a number of connected issues. Whilst questions of public spending, political strategy and local democracy are all important aspects of the confrontation, an even more important issue in hindsight has been how distinct classes and interest groups have been actively using national and local government (or, more accurately the national-local 'issue') to pursue their own ends. This applies not only to such powerful groups as financiers and companies but other interests we have not yet taken into account, especially some public-sector workers.

I now want to develop these assertions in more detail, referring first to these recent conflicts between local and central government and later to the longer-term relations between governments and social groups.

Central Government's Attack on the Municipalities: Intentions

One of the Thatcher government's original (and no doubt genuinely-felt) quarrels against certain local authorities is financial. They are, it is argued, expensive compared with average levels of local authority spending and therefore out of line with national government policy of restricting public spending, encouraging economic growth and discouraging inflation. In a purely economic sense the authorities have to be brought to heel.

This was much of the reasoning behind the 1983 Rates Bill. Under the 1980 'block grant' system national governments could already control local authority spending; as local councils spent more so central government (using their own calculations of an area's needs) reduced their contribution accordingly. Some Labour local authorities (the Greater London Council being the best example) had reached the stage when they were receiving no central government grant at all. Government action took (and, at the time of writing, still takes) the form of legal powers to set rates and 'cap' the rates of councils which were deemed to be 'over-spending'.

Similarly, the reasoning behind the Government's White Paper *Streamlining the Cities* was couched largely in terms of the economic waste represented by the Metropolitan County Councils (MCCs). As a group, the paper argued, these councils had 'consistently exceeded the expenditure targets set for them by central government' and 'increased their expenditure significantly more than other local authorities in England'.³⁰ As such, they needed to be abolished.

As a number of commentators have pointed out, however, the attack was at least as much political as financial. On the other hand, the charge of 'high spending' was not without foundation. The offending local authorities did tend to spend more per head than the average for British local authorities as a whole. As Table 5.6 shows, for example, the Metropolitan County Councils achieved comparatively high levels of expenditure in most areas of service.

Bearing in mind the different levels of need in the MCCs such variations should come as no surprise. And even taking the purely financial argument on its own terms there were, as Table 5.7 shows, considerable variations between councils; the West Midlands and Greater Manchester, for example, having consistently lower levels of spending than the group as a whole and occasionally even lower levels of spending than some of the non-metropolitan councils. If there were purely financial arguments for restricting public spending and for abolition they could, to say the least, have been applied more discriminately.

Table 5.6. County Expenditure on Services in the Metropolitan Areas 1982/3 (£ per capita)

	GLC	Metropolitan County Councils	English Non- Metropolitan County Councils
Service area			
Economic development	0.71	1.46	0.44
Education (ILEA)	323.20		220.77
Fire	15.77	11.79	9.45
Highways	7.39	26.03	22.56
Planning	0.84	1.09	1.37
Public transport	38.81	28.97	3.21
Recreation	2.43	0.22	0.44
Waste disposal	7.02	5.13	3.24
Police		46.05	37.03

Source: Appendices 3 and 4 of N. Flynn et al., *Abolition or Reform? The GLC and the Metropolitan County Councils* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1985).

Table 5.7 Expenditure Comparisons within Metropolitan County Councils, 1982 (£ per capita)

MCC	Service area						
	High-ways	Police	Planning and Dev't.	Waste Disposal	Econo- mic Dev't.	Fire	Public Trans- port
Gt. Manchester	22.31	48.69	1.10	6.87	0.69	12.00	25.09
Merseyside	28.06	57.53	0.73	3.76	1.75	13.97	32.02
Sth. Yorkshire	30.85	39.58	1.62	2.88	1.57	11.37	54.47
Tyne & Wear	23.68	42.97	1.73	5.58	2.79	12.62	44.00
W. Midlands	21.86	43.39	0.85	5.38	0.20	10.18	17.27
W. Yorkshire	28.16	43.56	0.95	4.80	3.04	11.84	22.20
Average	26.03	46.05	1.09	5.13	1.46	11.79	28.97

Source: see Table 5.6

However, the case for rate-capping and the abolition of the Metropolitan County Councils was never really financial. It was again political. This became increasingly clear as the legislation passed through Parliament. As Lord Bellman put it in defending rate-capping in the House of Lords:

A number of local labour councils are now in the hands of extremists. Their influence and numbers are growing and there is no will or ability among the national leadership to curb them. What if the present irresponsible behaviour of the few spreads to 60, 80 or 100 authorities?³¹

The underlying issues, then, were never simply about the absolute amounts of money spent by the councils but with the kinds of things they did with the money. Support for the new kinds of social movement (based on gender, race and the peace movement in particular) combined with new forms of local economic policy, emphasising major public intervention to support workplace democracy and production for need rather simply for profit, represented a radical alternative to the strategies being developed at national level. Nor was this simply a 'party political' matter. Abolition of the Metropolitan County Councils was strongly urged on the Conservatives by the Confederation of British Industry and by the more radical Institute of Directors. The rate-capping legislation, while clearly political, was nevertheless couched in financial terms; the often-repeated phrase here being 'the rates burden' having a supposedly crippling effect on British business.

The Attack on Local Government: Outcomes

The political nature of the attack by the Conservative government and its allies on the local authorities seems in little doubt. What is less appreciated, however, are the outcomes of the attack and the reasons for these outcomes. Many of these could not have been easily anticipated.

First, rate-capping and attempted control over local authority spending did not in the event have anything like the desired effect. Indeed, since it was eventually applied to only 10-15 deviant authorities, its material effects were never going to be substantial. Table 5.8, showing total local authority expenditure, indicates what has actually happened and places recent developments in the context of what happened under the previous Labour government. It is clear from this that local authority spending has fallen overall, but that it is overwhelmingly *capital* spending which has been most drastically cut back. Furthermore, the cuts in capital spending under the Labour Government were on an even bigger scale than those carried out since. Meanwhile, as local authority spending falls (11.3 per cent) central government's spending continues to expand (12.7 per cent). Incidentally, the *United Kingdom National Accounts* from which table 5.8 is taken, subtract from local authorities' capital expenditure their income from sales of council housing and other assets. This is controversial since authorities have been forbidden from using over 10% of this income for further spending. For this reason I have taken the liberty of adding income from council house sales and other sales back to the table. This gives a more accurate impression of local authority spending and its relative

Table 5.8 Total Expenditure on Goods and Services (1980 prices), £ million

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Total:											
Central Government	30485	31077	30470	30589	31048	31800	31810	32562	33564	33724	34734
Local Authorities											
current spending											
Education	9734	9786	9586	9818	9504	9741	9615	9627	9745	9678	9610
Other	8593	8530	8272	8726	9156	9202	9188	9368	9644	9799	9888
Total	18330	18327	17874	18544	19060	18943	18803	18995	19389	19477	19498
Capital spending											
on fixed assets			5807	5572	5224	4758	3723	4190	4699	4897	4516
less council-											
house sales			-184	-388	-476	-786	-969	-1927	-1286	-1051	-930
less other asset-											
sales			120	-323	-257	-230	-351	-415	-440	-496	-601
Total	6991	6716	5503	4861	4491	3742	2403	1848	2973	3350	2985
Total Local Authority	25321	25043	23377	23405	23551	22685	21206	20843	22362	22827	22483
Revised total											
(asset sales	25358	25074	23681	24116	24284	23701	22526	23185	24088	24374	24014
not included)											

Source: Adapted from Central Statistical Office UK National Accounts, 1986

stability. It has stayed at around £2,400 million per year.

Two things have therefore happened. First, the attempts to cut public spending have not been as successful as planned. If we take the year 1984/5, for example, central government plans were to cut local authorities by £2-2.5 billion. In the event, the outcome was a cut of about £200 million. Second, the attempts to control local authority spending have fallen in different ways on different parts of the authorities' programmes. Capital spending has been hardest-hit with, incidentally, public sector housing being one of the worst-affected areas.

What, in central government's terms, went 'wrong'? The attack on local authorities was, as we have seen, less an attack on the authorities as such and more an attack by powerful interests represented by the CBI and the Institute of Directors. It was an attack on what the local authorities stood for, the supposed issue of 'central-local' government relations incorporating a much broader issue about which classes of people were going to predominate in determining priorities for British society. But the central point here is that in attempting to implement these strategies the government and its supporters encountered other formidable interests.

One of the reasons for the comparative failure of the strategy to contain local authority expenditure was the influence of the well-organised local authority associations, some of whom are amongst the Conservative Party's best allies. Unsurprisingly, the Labour-controlled Association of Metropolitan Authorities condemned the government proposals (in particular the proposal to abolish the Metropolitan Councils) as 'an abuse of ministerial position and a breach of constitutional rights'.³² But a majority of Conservative councils also stoutly defended what they saw as a threat to local authority autonomy. For the Conservative-controlled Association of County Councils the government proposals were: 'an unacceptable centralisation of power, in practice in the hands of the executive rather than in parliament, and the further weakening of democratic control. The price to be paid is too high for a problem which is over-stated.'³³

For the Association's chairman the proposals represented 'state intervention on a scale unprecedented in this country. They smack of Big Brother, on the threshold of 1984.' Between them, the local authority associations (these being a strong lobby at national government level) have maintained consistent pressure against central government proposals; the earlier versions of the rate-capping legislation being watered down to exclude councils spending less than £10 million a year or less than their centrally-defined GREA (Grant Related Expenditure Assessment).

But perhaps of even greater importance has been the influence of the public sector workers themselves. These, in 1980s Britain, are amongst the most powerful sectors of the organised workforce. There are, however, big differences within the public sector. The 'service class' elements of this

group (such as teachers, social services workers and other upper level white-collar managers) remain relatively well-organised, well-unionised and highly influential as regards local government strategy. Others, especially the blue-collar manual workers, are in a considerably weaker position and are much less able to defend themselves from attacks. If we are trying to explain why it is that local authority current spending has increased (whilst at the same time the levels of service have decreased) then Table 5.9 begins to provide some clues.

Table 5.9

Manpower (sic) in Local Authorities (GB), full-time (FT) and part-time (PT) 1979, 1986.

	September 1979		October 1986		% Change	
	F.T.	P.T.	F.T.	P.T.	F.T.	P.T.
Service						
Education:						
Teachers	602,214	115,906	561,199	181,824	-6.8	+56.9
Manual	238,943	528,352	200,268	515,338	-16.2	-2.4
Construction	155,190	663	129,885	660	-16.3	-0.4
Refuse collection/ disposal	66,265	1,063	50,741	866	-23.4	-18.5
Housing	48,731	13,097	58,891	14,717	+20.8	+12.4
Police	125,730		177,546		+41.2	
Social Services	155,226	188,657	170,842	215,373	+10.0	+14.2
Other Services	565,236	112,772	509,424	115,384	-9.8	+0.5

Source: *Department of Employment Gazette*.

This table provides a useful background to the supposed problem of 'central versus local government'. It gives a good indication of the recent restructuring of local government workforces. Changes over the past ten years have clearly had uneven social effects. There are two main divisions here. The first is between the professionalised and relatively well-unionised white-collar workers and the less well-organised blue-collar workers. The white-collar workers have generally grown in strength, with changes resulting mainly from natural wastage. Blue-collar workers (including, for example, school cleaners and refuse collectors) have, however, been much worse affected. They have more frequently lost their jobs. Alternatively, they find themselves working for worse pay and in worse conditions, their local authority having perhaps made a successful bid against private contractors. A recent report has showed that

between 1980 and 1985 the percentage of full-time local authority workers with pay-levels below what the Low Pay Unit defines as 'low pay' rose from 27 to 45.³⁴

The other main change is in the creation of more part-time and temporary workers. Most remarkable here is the change in local authority teaching staff. As Table 5.9 shows, there has been increasing reliance on a large pool of part-time or temporary teachers. These are usually on short-term contracts and at the lowest income grades. The teachers are important since education represents the largest single part of local authority current spending. However the creation of central and peripheral workforces in this sector is just one part of a general restructuring of local authority workforces.

Local authorities are creating their own version of 'central' and 'peripheral' workers, analogous to the management-labour relations in the private sector which we discussed in Chapter 3: a central core of relatively secure, well-paid and unionised workers surrounded by a periphery of people with low pay, short-term contracts, fewer prospects and fewer employment rights. Women have been particularly affected by these changes. The rapid growth in part-time and temporary teachers, for example, is made up mainly of women; many of whom are returning after completing their family and combining school hours and school terms with domestic work and childcare. The Low Pay Unit also shows that for both full and part-time work local-authority-employed women are four times as likely as men to be earning low wages.

Looking at local-authority current spending as a whole, then, what we have been witnessing is not so much a cut in spending, but a reorganisation which incorporates a strengthening of the already-strong white-collar public sector unions at the expense of peripheral workers and to some extent at the expense of local authority services themselves.

Through various and uneven forms of resistance, therefore, recurrent local authority spending has been broadly maintained; albeit paying a drastically changed workforce. By contrast, cuts in capital spending have been all too easy to introduce. The bulk of this type of cut has, over the past ten years, fallen on council house building. Cuts in capital spending run fewer risks of immediate trouble. Few protests can be expected about something which has not been built. Furthermore, the workforces involved are mainly the construction workers in the private sector. And, as the Labour Party found when starting to reduce spending of this kind, the under-unionised building workers were easier to attack than the better-organised public sector employees.³⁵

Meanwhile, however, the standards of service provided by the local authorities have deteriorated. Despite the comparative stability of current spending, the standards of school education have, for example, worsened. One recent commentator outlines a familiar picture:

The range of subjects taught is declining, books and equipment are in short supply (average council spending on books is £10 per pupil), class sizes are not being allowed to fall as numbers of school age children decline, and school buildings are in poor repair. As a result parents are raising funds for essentials, and even acting as volunteer helpers in schools.³⁶

Similarly, the employment of private contractors has reduced the standards of school cleaning. At the same time, local authority social services are placing increased emphasis on something called 'the community' (mainly the unpaid labour of women) rather than local authority residential care.

So within the struggles between a supposedly all-powerful central government and supposedly much-weakened local authorities run a whole series of important contests between social groups. To varying extents (and with varying degrees of success) each has been using the institutions of government and the 'central-local issue' to defend its own resources and further its own ends.

The radical right, as we have seen, used the 'extremists' in local authorities as a way of attacking those on the left who were putting forward radical alternatives to Thatcherism. Similarly, the more organised parts of the public sector, the local authority associations and the professionals within local government have been using the 'local democracy' cry not simply to attract public support and protect services but to reinforce their own positions. And it is of course precisely this latter group which has been made a principal target of the 1987 Conservative government.

A good example of the local authority associations' strategy was the 'Keep it Local' campaign organised by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities. During 1982 they published a number of advertisements in the popular and serious press. The following, accompanied by a photograph of a much-modified copy of the 1979 Local Government, Planning and Land Bill, appeared in March 1982.

WITH ITS USUAL CARE WHITEHALL HAS PUT TOGETHER SOME LEGISLATION

The legislators do like to keep busy.

Particularly when it comes to imposing centralised control on local affairs.

In 1979 they put the Local Government Planning and Land Bill before Parliament.

Parliament didn't care for it. And the Bill was withdrawn.

Swiftly Whitehall put together some new proposals, imaginatively

entitled the Local Government Planning and Land (No.2) Bill.

It became law, transforming the financial framework within which Local Authorities work.

Within a year Whitehall was back with the punitive Local Government Finance Bill.

So many MPs doubted the constitutional wisdom of the referendum-clause, the Bill was withdrawn within a month.

Now, for the fourth time in two years, the legislators are back. With (wait for it) the Local Government Finance (No.2) Bill.

And even as this Bill is about to become fixed in law, there is already in existence a Government Green Paper outlining radical changes to the financing of Local Government.

The conclusion is that Whitehall is in too much of a hurry. We believe this latest Bill should at least have a time limit imposed on it.

So that it can be replaced or abandoned once all parties are agreed on the proper relationship between Central and Local Government. And upon a new rating system.

To quote G.W. Jones and J.D. Stewart (Professors of Government, and Local Government respectively),

'Whitehall's record is amazing: four bills in two years; two bills withdrawn; three major changes in intention; and a grant system that is not merely complex beyond belief but contradictory in purposes.'

Is this the right way to legislate?

If you think not, write to your MP. Ask him to voice the demand for a time limit on the Bill.

KEEP IT LOCAL

The Association of Metropolitan Authorities, 36 Old Queen Street, London SW1N 9JE. This advertisement has been sponsored by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities representing a large number of English local authorities in the belief that you should be kept informed.³⁷

The kind of coalition between public-sector producers and public sector consumers to which this advertisement alludes represents, potentially at least, a considerable point of opposition. It has not, so far at least, materialised on a long-term basis. Alliances between public sector white collar unions and consumers of public sector services against cuts in public services have been rare events. The most spectacular recent attempt to forge an inter-union alliance to protect public sector services was that in Liverpool in late 1985. The whole of the city's workforce of 31,000 people was called out in support of 49 councillors who faced fines, prison and disqualification for exceeding central government's cash targets by 20 per

cent and having an 'illegal' deficit budget. In the event, however, there was a split between the blue-collar and white-collar unions. The General and Municipal Workers' Union was left isolated in its support for the Labour councillors. The white collar unions (in particular the local government white-collar union NALGO) did not support the strike and it was called off.

As Colin Evans' detailed analysis of other areas has shown, the unions (and especially the white collar unions who have most to lose) are understandably more concerned to protect their jobs than to protect services.³⁸ One important example, however, of a temporarily effective producer-consumer coalition was that surrounding the long teachers' dispute. Despite the decline in educational services which resulted from school stoppages, the teachers managed, for a remarkably long period, to maintain the support of parents for increased salary demands and for restored negotiating rights. At the time of writing, the outcome of this dispute is still far from clear. What is even less clear is whether the teachers will be able to rely indefinitely on the support of parents, particularly as some schools within the public sector are allowed to opt out of local authority control and charge fees for some services.

The notion that local government is suffering from intensive central government control and that such control is causing the deterioration of services is one that has been promoted particularly by the local authority professional groups. However, it needs treating with considerable caution.

As Chris Pickvance has pointed out, 'local autonomy' has at least three dimensions: autonomy to set levels of local income through taxes and charges, autonomy in terms of income raised locally and autonomy for a local authority to spend income as it chooses. Bearing in mind the relatively stable levels of local authority current expenditure and comparing British with US local government autonomy, Pickvance concludes that in all three areas of 'local autonomy' British councils in fact still have considerable room for manoeuvre. (It is, by the way, noticeable that pleas to be free of central government did not include demands for the second kind of freedom; freedom from central government grants. Such grants come with few controls over the ways in which they are spent.) 'Local government in Britain', Pickvance argues, 'has tremendous discretion in spending - legislation is mostly permissive and central grants are accompanied by few controls.'³⁹

Some of the most vocal and persistent pleas for local autonomy have again been heard most from the better-organised and more influential public-sector professionals in local government. Many, though by no means all, remain keen to preserve the notion that they, and their professional independence, are essential to protect public services.

Local autonomy is treated as a self-evident good by councils, but rarely justified. The notion that it is required by professionals who can be relied on to meet local needs is an attractive one, but in the light of the British experience of spending cuts, non-defence of service levels and disproportionate job loss among manual local government employees, a false one.⁴⁰

One effect of concentrating political attack solely on 'autocratic' central governments and their attempts to control public spending is to deflect criticism by consumers of how finances are being raised by and used within local authorities themselves. The position of the public sector professionals is further strengthened by the fact that local councils remain largely protected from local political processes. This is because people's votes at local level are for national parties and are largely a reflection of national parties' popularity rather than a measure of the success (or otherwise) of their local council.

So contrary to the rhetoric (and contrary to what many on the Left and the Right thought to be taking place during the height of the controversies) the central-local government 'issue' was, in the event, only partly about local government democracy itself. It was eventually much more about how social groups with greater or lesser amounts of power used the issue to promote and protect their own ends. The result, which was not especially planned, is socially uneven and highly divisive. Some groups (such as women, ethnic minorities, school children and elderly people) have suffered particularly, being unprotected either by the forces of the Right or by such institutions as public sector unions and professional associations. The abstract ideal of 'local democracy' has somehow been over-ridden and used by the powerful to protect their interests at the expense of others.

So in much the same way that 'community' is used by and deployed by those who are economically and socially powerful, 'local democracy' is another concept which, as I will be arguing later, has much to recommend it, but can be used to systematically benefit some groups of people more than others. This double-edged nature of democracy is something Marx recognised nearly a century and a half ago: 'Just as the Christians are equal in heaven though unequal on earth, the individual members of the people become equal in the heaven of their political world, though unequal in their earthly existence in society.'⁴¹

What Marx did not point out, however, is that the inequalities of people's 'earthly existence' take very different forms in different places. This means that 'the heaven of their political world' (the laws and decrees made by national governments) will necessarily have continuing difficulties in accommodating the demands of all the people on 'earth'.

National versus Local: a Necessary Tension

The conflict between uneven development and social democracy brings us to the heart of our problem, one that has emerged in a particularly visible way under the Conservative governments since 1979.

On the one hand, as I hope to have made clear, the uneven development of social relations is a necessary feature of a capitalist economy. Capital descends on places and on people like a locust, attempting to find profitable working relations, with the constant threat of moving on to more profitable regions. People (and the physical infrastructure which they use and inhabit) are, by comparison, relatively static. So any national government promoting a profitable economy (and in a capitalist economy that includes all governments) is of necessity not only promoting exploitation of labour forces but social unevenness over space and time. On the other hand, such a strategy is in direct contradiction with the principal defining feature of a national state. This is the notion of providing equal citizenship; individuals having equal rights before the law, equal democratic rights and, at least in principle, minimum levels of health and welfare. These processes are in direct collision: a 'successful' economy generating uneven development and inequality of citizenship.

This leads to another contradiction at the heart of any national government strategy. Even if national governments wholly dispensed with local authorities as a means of dealing with social inequalities and uneven development, some kind of apparatus would still be needed (if necessary in the depths of Whitehall) to deal with the fact that citizens with supposedly equal rights were in fact benefiting in different ways in different places as a result of state strategies. Furthermore, some decision-makers, somewhere, have to be exercising a degree of autonomy which is necessarily distinct from any national government strategy.⁴² Such is the Achilles heel of any nationally-formulated strategy. It simply cannot be applied where social relations are (necessarily) unevenly developed. Given this necessity, however, there is still the question of whether in centralised bureaucracies this diversity is covered over or is out in the open for debate.

Following the 1987 general election it seemed to many that the Conservative Party was more entrenched than ever. They were, it seemed, safely protected by the prosperous 'South', dominated by a younger, less-unionised and upwardly mobile population. Despite losing 17 seats, the Conservatives retained all but 0.3 per cent of their 1983 vote. As we have seen, the Labour opposition meanwhile found most its support in the North, and especially amongst people dependent on public sector support. In the election they added (despite a campaign that was much better organised than that in 1983) only 3.2 per cent to their vote and an extra 20 seats.

The position appeared as one of political deadlock. On reflection, however, the social tensions of uneven development outlined above are still very much there. Furthermore, they represent a potentially disruptive (possibly explosive) threat to an apparently secure national government. The best way of seeing this tension is with the aid of the political maps (Maps 1.1–1.4).

We cannot of course read off political alignments from particular kinds or levels of uneven development. There are, for example, no necessary links between high levels of unemployment and support for particular parties. The Conservative Party, representing the sustained investment of private capital can, as the voting of many Midlands constituencies seems to indicate, be seen as a perfectly legitimate way forward for an under-capitalised region; a way forward which is as valid as Labour Party strategies aimed at increasing public-sector investment. Nevertheless, the uneven development of British society is, in a fairly systematic fashion, working its way through into political divisions.

In 1987, for example, Scotland saw its so-called 'domesday scenario': 50 seats for Labour, 9 for the Alliance, 3 for the Nationalists and 10 for the Tories; but all within a national government overwhelmingly dominated by the Conservatives. Similarly, Wales finished with 24 Labour seats, 3 Alliance, 3 Nationalists and 8 Conservatives; again, all within a supposedly Conservative nation. Again, the very 'success' of the market economy is slowly reducing the legitimacy of the very government promoting it. And this is leading to increased opposition in some regions (especially Scotland) and increasing demands for some form of local autonomy. Much the same could be said of smaller-scale colonies such as Merseyside and Glasgow. These have seen declines in their Tory votes of 18.5 per cent and 13.5 per cent since 1979.

The point again is that heavy reliance on market forces is producing the basis of political and social instability. Contemporary political deadlock may not be so inevitable and long-term as it seems. An alternative, although it will certainly not abolish the contradictions of uneven development, is to start developing strategies in which the emphasis is much less on national policy and much more on smaller-scale locality, encouraging local diversity and local self-determination rather than trying to over-ride it.

A widely-discussed and necessary step in this direction is some form of proportional representation. The present 'first past the post' system is clearly unfair. Whereas it took in 1987 only 39,000 and 44,000 votes to elect a Conservative and a Labour MP, nearly 334,000 votes were needed to elect an Alliance candidate. There remain, however, difficulties with Proportional Representation. These are of two kinds. First there are problems with the results of PR itself. Such a system can, for example, leave small parties with a degree of national power which is wholly out

of line with their electoral support. Again, a PR system (at least of the 'list' kind adopted in many European countries) means electors are voting for national party MPs who may have precious little connection with localities. Some would argue that this weakens the link between MPs and their constituencies. On the other hand, it could be equally well be argued that the linking of the electorate to national parties would be a way of strengthening people's influence over national governments.⁴³

The second set of difficulties is perhaps even more important. While it may be necessary as a means of gaining a more representative form of democracy, Proportional Representation is not sufficient as a means by which people can gain greater control over their own lives. An alternative to the (doomed) project of combining strong national government with outstanding national economic success is that of actively promoting local diversity and local self-determination. However, while sounding reasonable enough, even this alternative has its own difficulties. In particular, it calls into question the role of central governments under continuing circumstances of uneven social development. We now need to discuss these difficulties and their implications in more detail.

Notes

1. B. Jessop, *The Capitalist State* (London: Martin Robertson, 1982) p. 244.
2. The literature on corporatism in British politics is now very considerable. For an overview of the subject see Chapter 8 of J. Dearlove, P. Saunders, *Introduction to British Politics* (London: Polity, 1984).
3. On the question of whether women did or did not gain as a result of reforms during the Second World War period see P. Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War* (London: Croom Helm, 1984). The changing balance of social relations and its effect on social policy in Britain during the War is discussed in Chapter 4 of P. Dickens *et al.*, *Housing, States and Localities* (London: Methuen, 1985).
4. On the emergence and post-war expansion of the British welfare state, see in particular I. Gough, *The Political Economy of the Welfare State* (London: Macmillan, 1979). As regards housing in particular, see P. Dickens *et al.*, *Housing*.
5. Public Records Office, PRO CAB 67/17.
6. S. Watson with H. Austerberry, *Housing and Homelessness. A Feminist Perspective* (London: Routledge, 1986) p. 51.
7. Quoted in R. Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism* (London: Merlin, 1973) p. 365.
8. *The Times*, 18 February 1974.
9. Whether the Conservative Party's version of New Right thinking adequately reflects the views of the original New Right philosophers (especially Friedman and Hayek) is not a matter I want to take up here in

detail. I think, however, it can be strongly argued that Thatcherite 'New Right' thinking was very much a bastardised version of the original. It is particularly ironic to note, for example, that the Conservative governments' attempt to undermine local authorities ran directly counter to Friedman and Hayek. They attached the greatest importance to retaining local democracy as the political equivalent to the freedom of the marketplace.

10. On the growing significance of multinational companies in the British economy see, for example, A. Gamble, *Britain in Decline* (London: Macmillan, 1981); B. Sutcliffe, *Hard Times* (London: Pluto, 1983), and J. Urry, 'Deindustrialisation, households and politics' in L. Murgatroyd *et al.*, *Localities, Class and Gender* (London: Pion, 1985).

11. H. Wilson, *The Labour Government 1964-1970* (London: Weidenfeld, 1971) p. 37.

12. See R. Forrest, A. Murie, 'Marginalization and subsidized individualism: the sale of council houses in the restructuring of the British welfare state', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, vol.10, no.1 (March 1986).

13. Preliminary figures for the 1987 general election show, however, a partial reversal of 'de-alignment'. Labour regained some support from semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers, its vote from this group increasing by 6 per cent, or twice the national average. On the other hand, the vote of the 'skilled manual' workers (including foremen, supervisors and craft workers) swung by a further 2.5 per cent towards the Conservatives compared with 1983. See I. Crewe, 'A new class of politics', *Guardian*, 15 June 1987. On 'de-alignment' more generally, see, for example, Chapter 6 of S. Lash, J. Urry, *The End of Organised Capitalism* (Oxford: Polity, 1987).

14. Sources for the 1987 election results are 'All the trends point to a Tory future', *Sunday Times*, 14 June 1987, and I. Crewe, 'A new class of politics', *Guardian*, 15 June 1987.

15. On the 'neighbourhood effect' in electoral politics see M. Savage, 'Understanding political alignments in contemporary Britain: do localities matter?', *Political Quarterly*, vol.6, no.1 (1987), Chapter 4 of R. Johnston, *The Geography of English Politics* (London: Croom Helm, 1985); R. Johnston, 'The neighbourhood effect revisited: spatial science or political regionalism?' *Society and Space*, vol.4, no.1 (1986).

16. On spatial variations in British politics, see J. Curtice, M. Steed 'Electoral choice' and 'Appendix 2: an analysis of the voting'.

17. *Ibid.*

18. P. Tatchell, *The Battle for Bermondsey*, (Nottingham: Heretic Books, 1983) p.44.

19. See C. Husbands, *Racial Exclusionism and the City: the Urban Support of the National Front* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1983).

20. P. Corrigan, 'Doing Nothing' in S. Hall, T. Jefferson (eds) *Resistance Through Rituals* (London: Hutchinson, 1976). The first chapter of this book provides a conceptual overview of how 'subcultures' relate to industrial restructuring, neighbourhood change and dominant cultures. However, it does not adequately demonstrate the social relations (those, for example, surrounding domestic property) linking the dominant and subordinate cultures. On 'the magical recovery of community' see in particular P. Cohen, 'Sub Cultural Conflict and Working Class Community', *CCCS Working papers in Cultural Studies*, no.2 (1972) and J. Clarke, 'The Skinheads and the Magical Recovery of Community', in S. Hall, T. Jefferson (eds), *Resistance*. On the drift to a more authoritarian law 'n order society see in particular S. Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis* (London: Macmillan, 1978).
21. E. Cashmore, *Rastaman: the Rastafarian Movement in England* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1979) p.193.
22. K. Newman, *Policing London: Post Scarman*, Sir George Bean Memorial Lecture, 30 November 1983.
23. P. Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (London: Hutchinson, 1987).
24. Lash and Urry, *The End of Organised Capitalism*. On the significance of new forms of non-class-based social movements see, for example, M. Castells, *The City and the Grassroots* (London: Arnold, 1983), A. Touraine, *The Voice and the Eye. An Analysis of Social Movements* (Cambridge University Press, 1981) and Gilroy, *There Ain't*. One of the difficulties with Castells and Touraine, however, is they often fail to relate such movements to changes in the social relations of employment; seeing such movements as largely unrelated to changes in the realm of production and arguing that non-class-based movements are irrevocably supplanting social movements surrounding class relations.
25. Lash and Urry, *The End of Organised Capitalism*.
26. See A. Whyte, 'Thinking for Ourselves', Chapter 4 of *The CND Story*, (London: Allison and Busby, 1983).
27. Whyte, 'Thinking'.
28. This quote comes from a round-table discussion on black sections: 'Radical demand...or distraction', *Marxism Today*, September 1985.
29. On local authority women's initiatives see S. Halford, 'Women's Initiatives in Local Government: Tokenism or Power?' University of Sussex Working Paper in Urban and Regional Studies 58, 1987.
30. Department of the Environment, *Streamlining the Cities* (Cmd. 9063) (London: HMSO, 1983).
31. Bellman is quoted in S. Duncan, M. Goodwin, 'The Local Government Crisis in Britain, 1979-84', Geography Discussion Papers, London School of Economics.
32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. On the wages of local authority manual workers see Low Pay Unit *Pricing into Poverty* (November 1985). The percentage of this group, by the LPU's definition of low pay, has grown between 1980 and 1985 from 75 to 80. The LPU argues that this growth has particularly affected women since they are less able to earn overtime bonuses.

35. C. Pickvance, 'The crisis of local government in Britain: an interpretation', in M. Gottdiener (ed.), *Cities in Stress: a New Look at the Urban Crisis*, Urban Affairs Review 30 (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1986).

36. Ibid.

37. *New Statesman*, 12 March 1982.

38. C. Evans, *The Politics of Urban Service Provision in Britain 1979-83*, D.Phil Thesis, University of Sussex, 1986.

39. Pickvance, 'The crisis'.

40. Ibid.

41. K. Marx, 'Critique of Hegel's doctrine of the state' in L. Colletti (ed.), *Marx. Early Writings* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975).

42. These points on central local relations are developed more fully in S. Duncan, M. Goodwin, *Uneven Development and the Local State: Behind the Local Government Crisis in Britain* (Oxford: Polity, 1987).

43. For a full discussion of the arguments for and against proportional representation (and a description of the alternative systems), see P. Hain, *Proportional Representation* (Hampshire: Wildwood House, 1986).

Strategies, Alliances and Localities

This concluding chapter will spell out some implications of the earlier parts of this book. The chapter is divided into four connected parts.

The first outlines the general principle of 'maximum self-management' and discusses some detailed strategies towards this end. Here we will briefly return to some of the changes discussed earlier (especially in employment and the diverse spheres of 'civil society') and try to identify some of the areas of public sector intervention where important changes can be made.

'Taking the New Right Half Seriously' is one recurring theme here. In many respects the prescriptions of the New Right, and particularly those emphasising maximum consumer power, are attractive. The other side to this emphasis on the individual consumer is, however, the maintenance of a free economy; one in which competing companies are responding to the prices individuals are prepared to pay. According to New Right theorists such as Hayek and Friedman, one of the state's main tasks is to provide a framework within which the signals of the price system can effectively operate. Revenue raised from taxes would be used to give marginal groups (the old, the sick, the poor) minimum incomes. This would allow them to also act as effective consumers. Meanwhile, if an individual does not approve of pay-levels, work practices or conditions at work, he or she should be at liberty to move to another enterprise.¹

The New Right's philosophies of an open society need taking seriously. But so also do the ways in which they are being introduced in practice. Whether or not their visions of individual consumer power are seen as desirable in the long run, the harsh social reality is that they are now being most actively endorsed and pursued by those who are already powerful. Meanwhile, those in the greatest social need are being further marginalised rather than made into effective consumers or mobile producers. Furthermore the conditions and relations within what Marx called 'the hidden abode of production' remain concealed.

The results of imposing abstract New Right ideals on an existing society are now clear and much has been learnt from them. It is now time, however, to try something different. This does not, however, imply a return to older forms of socialist strategy in the form of wholesale nationalisation, Keynesian economic management or 'one nation' politics. It does, however, imply a detailed knowledge of contemporary develop-

ments and a careful assessment of precisely how and where state intervention can be made.

The second section of this conclusion looks at possible social and political alliances which might be formed around new strategies. The central objective here is with what is sometimes called 'restructuring for labour'. This phrase does not, however, adequately reflect the varied forms of exploitation and oppression with which this book has been concerned. 'Labour', for example, means unpaid labour in the home as well as labour in employment. More broadly still, 'restructuring for labour' implies a concern with the whole of people's lives; their housing and welfare, for example.

It is easy enough for the left to have an abiding concern with the economically, socially and politically marginalised. My argument here, however, is that a group which has pervaded the whole of this book (and which tends to be treated with some hostility by the Left) needs taking much more seriously. This is the middle class, more specifically the 'service class' of managers, professionals and technicians. As we have often seen, they are not only rapidly increasing in numbers, but they are of key and growing significance in affecting people's lives. The service class, or at the very least elements of this class, needs therefore drawing into the various strategies of 'restructuring for labour'. There is, however, a contradiction in such incorporation of senior managers into a project of 'maximum self management'. In Chapter 5 we saw how the Labour governments of the 1960s actively recruited the support of 'modernising' private-sector service-class managers. They did so, however, without attempting to restructure the social relations of production. A longer-term part of this kind of strategy is aimed, therefore, at dispersing the activities of the service class, rather than simply recruiting them.

Assuming, however, that the short term aim is new alliances, the third part of this conclusion is concerned with some practicalities of such coalitions. The service class is still growing and forming its social priorities. It is not too late, I argue, to affect its politics. This leads, fourthly, to an argument in favour of specifically local or regional social and political coalitions. The increasingly uneven geography of British society necessitates an increased emphasis on strategies tailored to the needs of particular places. And most significant here is the fact that geographical mobility is declining. To an increasing extent people in widely contrasting social circumstances are sharing the same localities. Furthermore, they are doing so on an increasingly long-term basis. In short 'the politics of locality' is becoming an increasingly important part of most people's lives.

Maximum Self-Management

Raymond Williams offers an attractive vision of a new, more democratic form of society. He argues that priority must be given to 'maximum self-management'; the dispersal of power away from centralising governments and economies, with people themselves gaining greater control over their own lives.

It is clear that if people are to defend and promote their real interests on the basis of lived and worked and placeable social identities, a large part of the now alienated and centralised powers and resources must be actively regained, by new actual societies which in their own terms, nobody else's, define themselves.²

As Williams himself recognises, however, there are a number of questions about what self-management actually means and how it can be achieved. How can it be achieved in industrial and financial enterprises which seem, to an increasing extent, to be operating at a global scale? Similarly, given what seems like the increasing significance of central government power, how do national government strategies square with the principle of increased self-management? If we are not careful here we can start adopting a rather romantic vision of self-management, one implying that democratic socialism means small-scale and autonomous communes for people whose horizons are limited to the geographical confines of their lives and who remain disconnected from international economies and national governments. Clearly, it would be a mistake to conflate 'maximum self-management' with such introspective insularity. While immediate experience can be the starting-point, self-management also means using nationally (even internationally) based resources towards the objective of self-determination. We should remember here the warnings in the last chapter about promoting localism as a self-evident good.

Learning from Locality

A pre-requisite for maximising self-management is what we can call 'learning from locality'. I hope to have demonstrated in this book the extent to which people are perfectly well able to take stock of their circumstances, to generalise from their work and community lives and to act accordingly. Politics is one of the most important aspects of this acting. But politics is only part of an active learning process in which people, on the basis of their experience and what they know about the outside world, are learning about and trying to influence social organisation.

This capacity for taking stock on the basis of daily life and on the basis of what is known about broader processes is very considerable. We have seen, for example, that owners have no trouble monitoring in a very

detailed fashion the value of their homes and coming to their own conclusions about why these values are changing. They also have clear views on the processes underlying the loss of jobs or the reasons for a hospital closing.

Similarly, industrial managers do not make plans for 'firms as a whole' or for 'multinationals in general'. Representing the interests of *specific* firms and *specific* industrial sectors they are, as we have seen, assessing detailed combinations of people, technology and locality which will provide their companies and workplaces with the best competitive edge. On this basis they are calling on banks, on their headquarters or on governments (local and national) to give them the assistance they need. What I am suggesting here is an equivalent learning and mobilising process by, and on behalf of, those whose lives are, in Williams's words, 'alienated and centralised'.

A range of local authorities such as the Greater London Council and Sheffield City Council has been putting forward alternative, locally-based strategies of the kind I am suggesting. The challenge now is to assess the broader implications of these strategies and the kinds of coalitions and alliances which plans of this kind can be expected to make.

Towards a Changed Politics of Locality?

It can be argued that certain areas of social life remain best dealt with by national-level interventions and others by local-level interventions. It could be suggested, for example, that since capital tends to operate at the national and international scales, the most appropriate level of intervention as regards employment remains that of national government or indeed groups of national governments. Similarly, it could be argued that questions of 'civil society' or 'consumption' are still best dealt with at the local level.³ Despite recent centralising tendencies, local councils have long been mainly responsible for welfare provision rather than industrial strategy.

There have certainly been long-term tendencies for associations of this kind to be developed. And, in the absence of assertive alternative strategies, they may well develop unchecked. On the other hand, these links need not be assumed to be inevitable and unchangeable. Even though, for example, managers and industrial workers may be looking for substantial central government financial intervention to modernise their industry, they are also looking for very extensive support from local councils, local chambers of commerce and other groups representing the community. On the other hand, if a company should decide to play one locality off against another in its search for greater productivity and profitability, managers and workers may well again be seeking national government intervention. We can give a similar argument about civil society. It could well be suggested, for example, that questions of changing

the burden of domestic labour are, above all else, 'local' issues or even issues best confronted by households themselves. This is again, however, a rather myopic view. Some of the most pressing interventions to be made here are at *central* government level. This is because intervention might well require changes to the law and the taxation system.

So translating understanding based on everyday life into political action does not imply any neat distinctions between what are most appropriately 'national' or 'local' matters. Alternative strategies may need to start with people's lives, their shared experiences and the coalitions they forge in localities and workplaces. But starting with the scale of everyday life does not imply being constrained to stay at this scale.

Strategies

Earlier in this book we have been noting a wide range of ways in which British society is changing. There is always a danger of the *Left* remaining in permanently defensive and reactionary positions over these changes. Certainly it is difficult to enthuse over many recent developments. Examples are the new technologies being introduced into factories or homes, their apparent logic being the creation of armies of peripheral, part-time labour forces or the further marginalisation of women.

There are, nevertheless, positive sides to many of these changes. Take, for example, recent advances in flexible manufacturing. There is certainly no inherent problem in a profit-based company giving greater control to employees to organise their own work routines or using new technology to adapt rapidly to changing consumer demand. These are real gains. The problems start when profits start to be made by using the new technology and the new forms of management simply to make people work even harder, to remove real control or to make socially destructive products. Similarly, the 'self servicing' technology in the home does not necessarily imply a patriarchal social order, even if at present it tends to be used that way.

In short, we need to try having our cake and eating it. The benefits of recent changes need to be captured without the penalties. Paradoxically, 'maximum self-management' requires extensive state intervention into an economy and society where ownership and control are still overwhelmingly in private hands. But here again, we want to eat our cake as well as have it. State intervention is required, but it is not required in a heavy handed, top down, bureaucratic form. States (and particularly local states) are needed, but they are needed to foster and enable maximum self management.

Self-management, then, is the end objective. What are the various means by which the public sector can pursue this end?

Strategies for Local Economies : Local Corporatism

Local corporatism, incorporating deals between the main blocs of social and economic power (including in particular the organisations representing labour) would be one principle element of strategies to modernise industry and services. But while supporting such modernisation and helping to invest in new, flexible, technologies, they would be closely monitoring and regulating employment prospects and work conditions, especially for manual workers, junior white collar staff, women and racial minorities.

What would be the basis of such local corporatism? The Greater London Council and the West Midlands County Council demonstrated what this might consist of. Their strategies started with the recognition that the greater part of the jobs provided in Britain will indeed remain in the private sector. For this sector profit and loss will continue to predominate. So any attempt at supporting investment, stopping job losses, improving social relations and improving work conditions must begin to confront what is essentially a private economy.

Perhaps the most important feature of this kind of intervention is its rejection of nationalisation as a knee-jerk reaction to the private sector economy. Our earlier discussion of flexible specialisation and the increasing use by dominant firms of small subcontracting enterprises provides the central clue here. There could be some point in a national government owning and controlling a home-based multinational which calls the tune when it comes to employing smaller firms or influencing their work conditions. On the other hand, multinational companies expand on an international scale and will go to great lengths to avoid the clutches of national government. By contrast, there is little point in governments concentrating on owning and controlling small and highly dependent subcontracting firms which are constantly at the beck and call of large multinationals and under continual threat of bankruptcy. Nationalisation here would be all too easy and all too disastrous.

The implications are not straightforward, but the lesson is that simple prescriptions for state intervention need avoiding. Particular types and levels of state intervention will be appropriate for particular firms and particular industrial sectors. And in much the same way as successful senior managers need to familiarise themselves with the *detail* of their firms and their sectors, governments too need a proper understanding of how the private sector works and, stemming from this, an adequate knowledge of precisely where and how interventions can best be made.⁴

But while flexibility may be the order of the day, this does not rule out various forms of nationalisation and social ownership. A degree of equity control is crucial if social aims (such as greater employee self-management, improved work conditions and production of non-destructive commodities) are going to be met. The GLC and the WMCC provided a

model of how this could be done. They established boards with the aim of taking equity in private firms. The funds for both boards came from a two pence rate raised under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, this providing the West Midlands Board with a budget of £8 million for the financial year 1983-4 and GLEB with about £30 million. This meant the Boards were then able to offer finance to private companies. They were able to take equity stakes in expanding firms and could offer cheap loans. That was half of the deal. The other half was that management receiving such support had to enter 'planning agreements' with the boards and the trades unions. These normally covered product and marketing strategy, levels of investment, the location of investment, employment conditions, wages, training and equal opportunities. There was also the attempt to insist on 'socially useful production' as another sting in the tail for those in receipt of local authority funds. Not surprisingly, some managers backed out when informed of the strings attached.

At the centre of the GLC's policy was a new strategy towards the provision of long-term funding for industrial restructuring. Like many other commentators, the GLC argued that neither the major lending institutions in Britain nor the banks provided the kind of funding needed for the modernisation of the economy. In this respect industry in Britain fares badly compared with that in, say, Japan, Germany and France. In many other societies long-term finance is more available, either (as in Japan) with the aid of indirect government influence specifically aimed at channelling savings into industry or (as in France) extensive public ownership of banks and financial companies giving governments direct control over investments. Relations between finance and industry in these societies also demonstrate that there is scope for funding institutions which are much less centralised than those in Britain. Part of the German banking sector is, for example, organised through regional banks belonging to the local German '*lander*' or local states.

Contract Compliance

A second kind of 'deal' is contract compliance; intervention not in the form of direct ownership or control, but using the immense purchasing power of governments to influence the circumstances under which commodities are produced for the public sector.

Over £12,500 million a year is now spent by public corporations on goods and services and the GLC was again one of the authorities to start demonstrating what could be done with this power in the private market. In 1983 it established a contract compliance unit, assisted by the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Commission for Racial Equality, trade unions and employers' associations. In seeking tenders for the supply of goods and services, the Council used an approved list of 4,000 contractors and 1,600 suppliers. The unit required contractors to make a number of

undertakings. These covered the payment of fair wages, adherence to the Council's health and safety regulations and compliance with the Sex Discrimination and Race Relations Acts. Employers were, furthermore, obliged to provide details of their workforce; the numbers of women and ethnic minorities employed, for example, and an outline of recruiting procedures.⁵

The programme was modelled on Federal Compliance, a system which is now widely recognised in the US as a highly effective way of harnessing the private sector so as to advance the position of women and ethnic minorities.

Strategies for Civil Societies

Civil society has had a special and growing significance in contemporary politics. The continuing election of Conservative governments in recent years demonstrates the importance of winning widespread popular support by appealing to the world of 'freedom' and creativity outside as well as inside paid work. As I will indicate shortly, it is important to take the strategies of the New Right seriously. Similarly, the Greater London Council combined its economic and jobs strategy with highly successful interventions (the Fares Fair public transport campaign, for example, and a number of initiatives to promote popular culture) connected with the whole range of people's lives.

For governments to get involved in this sphere of 'freedom' and personal autonomy sounds like a contradiction in terms, but both the Left and the Right have been arguing the importance of identifying with people's lives outside the workplace at a time when a rising proportion of the workforce has little or no connection with the world of paid work. The GLC's fares campaign is case in point. Polls before the fares cut came out three to one against the Council. Six months after the experiment there was a two to one majority in favour.⁶ Such intervention in the realm of 'freedom' is a good example of how a strategy of clear benefit to the lowest income groups can also swing round a majority of opinion, including that of the middle class.

On the other hand it is important, bearing in mind the arguments we put forward earlier, not to over-estimate the political importance of civil society in isolation. There is really rather little evidence that divisions between, for example, those using public or private transport or those in public sector or owner-occupied housing are becoming electorally more significant than the divisions of the workplace. Rather, the divisions of civil society tend to compound the circumstances stemming from households' employment-position; improving or worsening this position according to the circumstances in question. Local and central government interventions here, then, are aimed at arresting these compounding effects,

local authorities again having a key role in developing plans for the specific combinations represented by different localities.

Domestic Work

Domestic work is one of the central elements of civil society. It is a form of production, but it is still one which is not recognised as part of the formal economy. The Greater London Council's *London Industrial Strategy* (LIS) reckoned that Londoners between them spend around 180 million hours a week in domestic work compared with 100 million hours in paid work. Yet nowhere is the former recognised as one of the key ways in which society is reproduced.

As we have seen, recent tendencies towards a 'self-service economy' are placing ever-increasing emphasis on domestic production, various forms of household and DIY equipment replacing the use of market economy outside the home. But as we have also seen, there are several problems with optimistic visions of 'self-servicing economies'. Equipment of this kind is most readily available to those households which can afford it. Furthermore, even when this equipment is obtained it remains women who make use of it. So household equipment (including supposedly 'labour-saving' devices) is bringing more unpaid work into the home.

So a prime concern here must be firstly with unpaid and often isolated and unrewarding domestic work. The time budget studies we saw in Chapter 4 showed clearly that it is still women who are doing an unequal amount of this domestic production. They are often, furthermore, being obliged to combine this kind of work with 'peripheral' paid work: low-paid, often insecure, jobs outside the home. The LIS confirms that this combination particularly hits women.

There are two kinds of implication here. One is, again, the creation of locally based coalitions (largely cutting across the class divisions between women) around strategies aimed at local employers. One kind of strategy is through the kinds of contract-compliance policies mentioned earlier. The GLC found this to be one the most effective ways of promoting equal opportunities. Again, if a local authority is providing finance, loans and contracts to firms, they are clearly in a key position to insist on conditions for such support. One item on the agenda would therefore be higher pay for part-time work, more flexible work patterns and the provision for childcare facilities at the workplace. Presumably demands could be made through a variety of regional agencies. The Welsh Development Agency, for example, could be making these kinds of demands on the multinational companies they are attracting to employ female labour.

But, while much can be achieved at the local level, the issue is eventually much too important to be left to *ad hoc* negotiations between local authorities and firms. Strategies to deal with the circumstances of women would rapidly need back-up by national government intervention in

the sphere of welfare legislation and tax reform. A practical first step would be for national government to change the tax laws to give special recognition to those providing domestic care.

There is, however, an even deeper problem here. It is one which again probably involves large-scale national government intervention. Domestic work is still a long way from being attributed the same kind of importance as 'real' paid work. In other words, orthodox economic strategy still sees domestic work as a free resource and intervention in this area as essentially a drain on the real productive economy. Intervention in the domestic economy will still, therefore, take second place to that affecting the market economy. In the long-term (and it is, to say the least, extremely long term) a redefinition is needed to reclassify 'the economy' to include domestic labour.

'Community'

New Right philosophy places great emphasis on voluntary and small-scale informal association as the basis of politics and social support. Similarly, parts of the Left endorse and finance decentralised services, self-help and associational life as an alternative to top-heavy local authority command-structures and welfare-provision. The public sector strategies we have been outlining in this chapter are also emphasising 'self-management' in the form of what communities can do for themselves.

As we have seen, however, an unquestioning reliance on 'community' contains some important difficulties. Again, there is the continuing tendency for informal community life and assistance to take place between middle-class people who have the time and the resources to engage in this type of work. Linked to this is the increasing domination of community by the service class. This means not just association with friends and belonging to neighbourhood organisations but an increasing concern for more material matters such as the protection of an area's house prices and the continuing domination of local political culture. To these ends other, less powerful, members of 'community' tend to get swept along. In the words of one recent author:

Modern neighbourhoodism is, in its purest form, an attempt by newcomers to *create* a local social world through political or quasi-political action. Great organisational skills and ingenious organisational devices are often used in attempts to mobilise old and new residents alike in order to protect amenities, enhance resources and to a greater or lesser degree, wrench control of the local milieu from outside authorities and vest it in local hands.⁷

Second, and perhaps even more importantly, 'community', especially in its caring sense, is, like domestic work, mainly unpaid women's time. Given

the rapidly-increasing number of households (especially elderly people, single parent households and the unemployed) the demand for this care is becoming enormous.

The New Right strategy towards community seems at first sight quite attractive. A typical proposal is to provide, through public subsidy, increasing spending power to those in need. Those requiring the services would then pay the carers. In this way the heavy-handed autocratic state bureaucracy is apparently avoided.

The main problem here, however, is similar to that surrounding other forms of public subsidy to market-supply. Who actually benefits from these subsidies? Is it those who are most in need or is it, in this case, high-paid minders of elderly people and children? At the very least, a strategy of this kind would need careful monitoring of the services that are actually delivered. But, still more importantly, much more would need to be known about the circumstances under which the services were *produced*. Despite the injunctions of the New Right theorists, the realm of production seems (here and elsewhere) largely ignored by the practioners of the New Right.

There is, however, no reason why 'community' should be the province of the market. A better solution would again be to recognise those who are now doing the caring work. This once more means adequately rewarding the mainly female labour involved rather than taking it for granted. This again would require national intervention. Despite, indeed because of, all the rather cosy implications of 'community', interventions of this kind would almost certainly require central government intervention; providing the funds and the taxation incentives to benefit the carers.

Strategies for Merging Production with Civil Society (Towards a Socially Useful Economy)

One of the most persuasive, but most misleading, arguments surrounding the provision of socially useful resources such as housing, healthcare and education, is that *first* there must be a profitable private economy. *Then*, when such an economy is achieved, we can begin to afford the collective resources we all want. This argument is broken, however, if the dichotomy is destroyed and the private economy makes socially useful products in the first place. A long-term aim (one which can be addressed by the measures outlined earlier) must therefore be towards changing 'the social division of labour', *what* is made by the economy. Once more the issue is not simply private (bad) versus public (good). A highly profitable multinational electronics company can make a socially useful product such as a refrigerator. Equally well it can be made to put its research and production energies into an ambitious programme of armaments exports.

In Britain this line of thinking about 'socially useful production' was

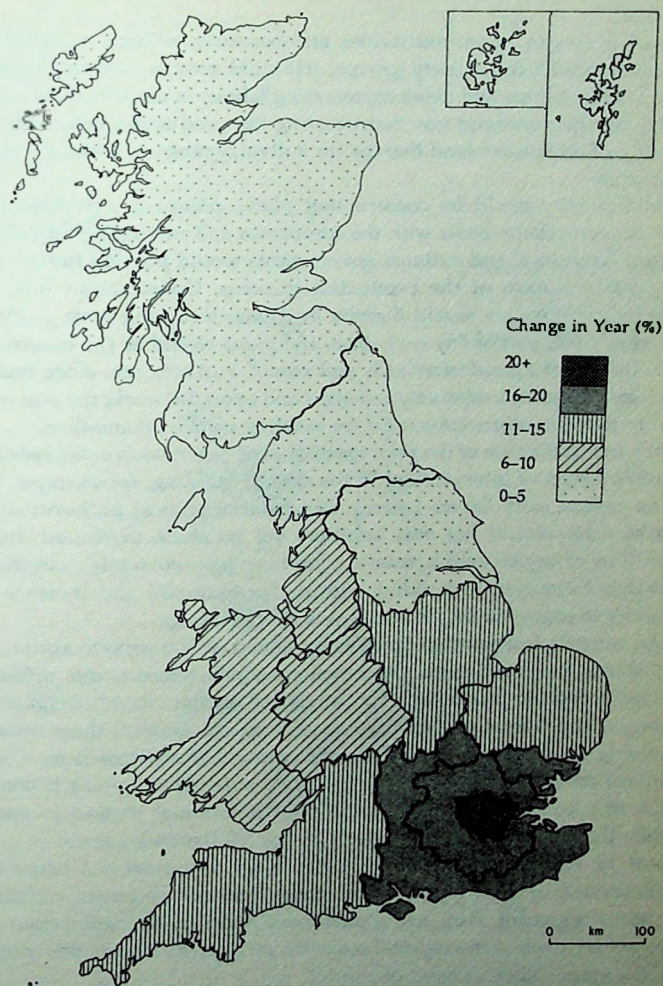
first established by the Shop Stewards Committee at Lucas Aerospace in 1975.⁸ Confronted by mass redundancies, a group of workers at Lucas put forward over 150 suggestions for products of more general use than the Concorde components on which they were working. Ideas included an inexpensive life-support system and a range of energy-saving products for housing and transport. Socially useful production has since been taken up by the Greater London Enterprise Board and by groups of London boroughs. In the Lucas case the redundancies nevertheless went ahead and the products were not made. Company resistance was only in part due to the perceived unprofitability of the new products. It was in fact established that many of the products did have substantial markets. The resistance stemmed as much from the fact that the workforce was asserting a right to influence the products it was making.

Construction is one sector of industry where a re-orientation towards socially useful production could be especially beneficial. This is now being demonstrated by the 'Homes and Jobs' strategies now being developed by Sheffield City Council, Manchester City Council and other northern local authorities. National governments have long used construction as a means of implementing Keynesian economic strategies. This sector has frequently been seen as an ideal means of injecting public and private finance into the economy and stimulating consumer demand. Furthermore, construction is seen as avoiding sucking in imports while still having a major beneficial effect on unemployment levels.

These reasons for state intervention in construction are, however, missing some central points about socially useful production. The British construction industry (including the major house-builders) are relatively good at making profits but they are much worse at making high quality buildings. In the case of the housebuilding companies, a principal reason stems from the windfall profits on land banking and land speculation. This means that in construction, capital does not find it necessary to invest substantially in technology and mass-production in the way that would be forced on a 'normal' industry in the search for profitability through increasing productivity.

What are the implications here for strategy? A great deal of the politics of housing concentrates on tenure; on, for example, the different levels of support given to owner-occupiers and to local authority tenants. One of the most obvious (and apparently most contentious) forms of intervention is to equalize the treatment of the two main tenures through, for example, reducing tax relief on mortgages and subsidising interest rates paid by local authorities.

This again, however, ignores the social relations of production and the real spread of benefits. For example, landed interests and the relatively inefficient building companies (rather than owner occupiers and council tenants) are likely to be amongst the main beneficiaries of any increase in



Source: Nationwide Building Society (reproduced with permission)

subsidies. In short, interventions to affect housing tenure underestimate the extent to which the production of housing of *all* tenures needs radical overhaul.

Bearing this in mind, authorities and consortia of local authorities in conjunction with community groups, self-build groups, building societies, tenants associations and those representing labour in construction could be switching their energies into restructuring the production and renewal of housing of all tenures (and thereby for a diverse range of social groups) in their area.

Second, they could be constructing plans, planning agreements and contract-compliance deals with the companies and materials suppliers. On the one hand local and national governments would provide funds for the modernisation of the production process. Construction firms and materials companies would thereby be guaranteed long-term profits. At the same time, part of any such deals and plans would be the construction of buildings at agreed standards and costs.⁹ Furthermore, since building remains dangerous, relatively low-paid and sporadic work, the aim would also be to force improvements for the building workers themselves.

The modernisation of the private sector does not of course preclude more familiar forms of intervention. In the case of building, for example, there is no reason why Direct Labour Organisations (local authorities' own workforces) should not only continue but be much expanded. Indeed, injections of capital could remove them from their currently marginalised position (restricted to building repairs, for example) and increase their capacity to engage in the construction of new buildings.

As regards intervention specifically aimed at the private sector, Map 6.1 shows in broad terms the extent to which house prices reflect the varied economic progress and prospects of regions. It also suggests that however much local or regional strategies are constructed, there remains a pressing need for a major set of interventions at national level. Clearly, some of the largest divisions now are between owner occupying households who may be benefiting from house price inflation at around 16 per cent while those in the North and parts of The Midlands are stuck at around three or four per cent. On the other hand, we must not become too mesmerised by these regional differences. Some of the largest inequalities in terms of housing gains, and compounded housing and employment gains, are not so much at the regional scale but at the 'urban' level; between, that is, the inner and outer areas of cities.¹⁰

Although initiatives and local strategies are best constructed by the groups most immediately affected, plans for an area of industrial decline will again almost certainly need linking to national government strategies if they are going to be more than local utopias. One solution to the vast discrepancies shown by Map 6.1 would be a national tax on house-price inflation, with the proceeds used to support low income households in areas such as the West Midlands.



Map 6.2 Arms companies paid £5 million or more by MOD 1979/80

Over £100m: 1. British Aerospace Aircraft Group; 2. British Aerospace Dynamic Group; 3. British Shipbuilders; 4. The General Electric Co Ltd; 5. The Plessey Co Ltd; 6. Rolls Royce Ltd Royal Ordnance Factories; 7. Westland Aircraft Ltd. £50-£100m: 8. BL Ltd; 9. EMI Ltd; 10. Ferranti Ltd; 11. Hunting Associated Industries Ltd. £25-£50m: 12. Dowty Group Ltd; 13. Lucas Industries Ltd; 14. Racal Electronics Ltd; 15. Short Bros Ltd. £10m-£25m: 16. British Electric Traction Co Ltd; 17. Decca Ltd; 18. Vauxhall Motors Ltd; 19. Gresham Lion Ltd; 20. Hawker Siddeley Group Ltd; 21. Standard Telephones and Cables Ltd; 22. Marshall of Cambridge (Engineering) Ltd; 23. Pilkington Bros. Ltd; 24. Cossor Electronics Ltd; 25. The Singer Co (UK) Ltd; 26. Smiths Industries Ltd; 27. Thorn Electrical Industries Ltd; 28. UK Atomic Energy Authority; 29. Vickers Ltd. £5m-£10m: 30. David Brown Holdings Ltd; 31. BTR Ltd; 32. Cable and Wireless Ltd; 33. Chloride Group Ltd; 34. Courtaulds Ltd; 35. Dickinson Robinson Group Ltd; 36. Dunlop Holdings Ltd; 37. Philips Electronic & Associated Industries Ltd; 38. Ford Motor Co Ltd; 39. Grindlays Holdings Ltd; 40. Guest Keen and Nettlefords Ltd; 41. Rank Organization Ltd; 42. Rolls Royce Motor Holdings Ltd; 43. Ropner Holdings Ltd; 44. Stone Platt Industries Ltd; 45. Vaniona Group Ltd; 46. Weir Group Ltd; 47. Yarrow & Co Ltd.

Adapted from War Lords CIS Anti Report 31. UK Arms Industry

Strategies for the Public Sector

So far we have looked at the relationships between the economy, civil society and state intervention. This does not adequately recognise, however, what local and national governments can achieve and indeed are achieving through their own spending and actions. We have already discussed contract compliance as one way of influencing the private sector's activities which falls short of social ownership. There are other indirect, but potentially effective, ways in which governments can exercise a strong influence over the private sector.

Using Local and Central Government, but Protecting Services

Sheffield City Council is one of the leading local authorities in the active use of the public sector. It has developed a series of strategies aimed at influencing the structure of local employment in its area; specifically through its own labour force of some 31,000 people. The Council's own employment, training and recruitment policies can, in principle at least, have a substantial effect on paid employment in the area. One example is again in the area of equal opportunities for women, with the Council increasing the numbers of women apprenticeships in departments (such as public works) which have long been male-dominated.¹¹

Bearing in mind, however, that 75 per cent of public spending does not flow through local councils, the principle of using government finances towards more progressive ends can be used to even greater advantage by central government departments.

One of the most outstanding instances is the Ministry of Defence budget. For many people the priority here is finding more socially useful ways of allocating this twelve per cent of public spending. But there is another good reason for discussing national government spending here. For it is an excellent example of how government spending affects the fortunes of localities. Public spending on defence is now some six times that spent on regional policy. It is therefore a massive but wholly unofficial regional strategy. As Map 6.2 shows, many of the affluent southern regions are having their affluence further boosted by this particular form of central government spending. Especially gaining is the South West which, at £259 *per capita* in defence spending in the late 1970s, was receiving well over double that of any other region. Taking welfare spending and defence spending as a whole, the South East and the Northern regions are receiving about the same levels of spending, with Yorkshire/Humberside and Wales trailing well behind.¹²

Such, then are some of the means of moving towards maximum self management. It hardly needs saying that the precise combination of these

strategies will vary between localities and regions. For some regions, such as the West Midlands area we looked at in Chapter 3, re-investment in flexible manufacturing may well be a high priority. As we also saw in that chapter, however, such forms of manufacturing can also be successfully introduced, however, into small companies which are not necessarily in the traditional 'industrial' sectors. Nevertheless, local authorities such as those in Greater London may well put special emphasis on other kinds of strategy, such as those supporting the domestic and community life of people who have little regular contact with the world of paid work.

Strategic Alliances: Recruiting the Service Class?

We have so far discussed only the objective of self-management and some of the means towards achieving it. It is all very well, however, dreaming up new plans. But who is going to support them? As we have argued throughout this book, it is increasingly difficult to read off someone's politics simply from their social class or gender. Also critical is *where* that person lives. We can nevertheless make a broad assessment of the support such strategies might acquire. We can reasonably expect support from those who are most likely to benefit, but the strategies we have been discussing here also need the support of those who may not be the most obvious beneficiaries. I will particularly emphasise a key group in contemporary British society; the service class of upper-level managers, professionals and technicians. In the long term 'maximum self-management' means the devolution of this group's expertise to those who are in subordinate, often de-skilled, jobs. In the shorter term, however, we can engage in the active involvement of these core, highly influential, middle-class people. Bearing this group particularly in mind, what kinds of coalition can we expect around the strategies outlined earlier?

Some Potential Coalitions: at the Workplace, in Civil Society, in the State

Strategies aimed at the modernisation of industry and services can be expected to attract some groups and not others. As regards the service class, the private-sector professional and managerial classes continue, as the 1987 election showed, to be amongst the staunchest supporters of the Conservatives' free market strategy. They are perhaps least likely to welcome corporatist deals aimed at improving the circumstances of labour forces. Amongst private sector managers as a whole, however, those increasing numbers of employers who work not in large corporations but in a wide range of small subcontracting and consultancy firms might well support proposals to sustain production.

A strategy of increased investment would stand a still better chance of

winning round other groups of workers. These include women (still of course predominantly located in the more routine and disposable jobs) and upper-level skilled and clerical workers.

Skilled manual workers and upper-level blue collar workers are other key groups here. It is often argued that the decline of support for the Labour Party by skilled workers is a critical factor in the party's post-war decline. On the other hand, if the arguments we put forward in the last chapter are correct, the important distinction to be made in terms of individuals' political alignments is not so much between the 'skilled' and 'unskilled' working class, but between working class people on the one hand and foremen and technicians on the other. The former still give quite high levels of support to Labour (its problem being the dramatic decline in the numbers in this category) while the foremen and technicians are amongst the Conservatives' more important supporters. So a sustained programme of industrial investment led by local and national authorities would be very much aimed at winning the support of this latter 'blue-collar elite' as well as, of course, increasing and maintaining the support of manual workers.

Interventions in civil society can be expected to find a wide basis of support, although some key groups will not endorse some strategies in this area of public intervention. The mass production of inexpensive but high-quality housing, for example, necessarily involves substantial control over land prices. Such a strategy will therefore encounter intense opposition from landed interests on the fringes of urban areas and housebuilders who depend on land speculation to make profits. As I have suggested earlier, the latter would, with the aid of public support to further capitalise the industry, be obliged to increasingly rely on making profits out of production rather than wasteful land speculation.

A strategy affecting house prices while benefiting low-income groups, may also not immediately endear itself to those well-ensconced in the midst of house-price inflation; the many middle class owner-occupiers in the South East being a good example. On the other hand, there may even be gains (such as increased spatial mobility) for these people. Furthermore, industrialists now committed to running their businesses in Britain's booming southern regions are increasingly complaining of restricted expansion and the loss of contracts precisely because house prices are making it extremely difficult to attract the right kind of skilled labour.

Furthermore, the restructuring of building production could appeal to a diverse range of groups. These might include, for example, those higher-level blue-collar and junior white-collar workers for whom purchase of a decently-constructed, reasonably spacious but relatively inexpensive house remains a central objective.

Finally, the Mass Observers and our discussion in Chapter 5 of gender

differences voting suggest that public sector strategies may gain particular support from women. So while some men may tend to find the attractions of free-wheeling monetarism irresistible, it is as least possible that some women are more likely to support programmes involving greater levels of collective provision and public spending. A possibly important indication here comes again from the 1987 general election. While men in the South shifted one percent against the Labour Party, women shifted by five percent *towards* Labour.¹³

As regards using state power to influence the development of local economies, this seems fine in principle. Some problems over social support cannot, however, be easily dismissed. Perhaps the main difficulty concerns the different levels of organisation within public-sector bureaucracies and the ways in which they are able to influence government strategies. The problem for governments is that of resistance against change amongst the more powerful groups (predominantly those who are male, white-collar and professionalised) while leaving others, especially those in the more casualised, blue-collar and traditionally feminised jobs, still fending for themselves. The uncomfortable lesson for those defending the 'state power' strategy (including those defending local democracy) is that the priority now has to be that of assuring that public-sector finance actually goes towards the delivery of services rather than funding the higher-level and financially well-rewarded public-sector professionals.¹⁴

Recruiting the Service Class?

So what are the prospects for recruiting the core groups of British society into the proposals we have outlined earlier? Clearly, the picture is mixed. Many of those with most to lose will have difficulties in endorsing these proposals. Private sector employers and managers as well as landowners may well balk at some of these proposals, although key managerial groups in the construction sector might welcome a government sponsored programme of industrial restructuring. The proposals would also meet with a mixed response from the public sector service class, although here we can anticipate more support than from the private sector.

The important thing to remember is that the politics of the service class (and, more generally, of the 'middle' class) is actually more fragmented and insecure than is often thought to be the case. The results of the 1987 general election were very important in this respect. They showed the politics of the middle class to be more fragmented and insecure than is often thought to be the case. There was, for example, a swing of 9 per cent away from the Conservatives amongst those members of the middle class who had received higher education. Those working in the public sector also swung against the Tories, their votes tending to go to the Alliance. The middle classes working in the private sector, by contrast, swung by 1

per cent towards the Conservatives.¹⁵

The politics of the service class therefore appears relatively unstable. Why is this the case? We must remember their rapid growth in recent years. Between 1971 and 1981 the number of professional and intermediate white collar workers grew by 26 per cent. (Meanwhile, the numbers of skilled and unskilled working-class people fell by 11 and 15 per cent respectively.) One of the results of this very rapid growth is that these groups have been recruited from an exceptionally diverse array of social backgrounds. A 1974 survey in Scotland suggested, for example, that only about 43 per cent of service-class men had fathers from the same class.¹⁶ A slightly earlier survey showed an even lower rate of self-recruitment amongst this group. In this case only about a third had fathers from the same class.¹⁷ These surveys lead to the suggestion that the main reason why these groups are not yet a distinct and coherent political force is the fact that they come from a very wide range of social backgrounds. The implication is that their politics are still malleable and they could still be recruited to alternative strategies.

Declining Spatial Mobility: an Emergent Politics of Locality?

We have so far argued for a locally-rooted form of society and one which aims to recruit members of the service class. What basis is there for optimism over a social and spatial strategy of this kind?

One of the most important (yet overlooked) changes in recent years has been the decline of geographical mobility, especially the decline of middle-class mobility. If the 1950s and 1960s were a time of hyper-mobility, as managers and their families moved rapidly round the country (and indeed to other countries) in their rise up career hierarchies, the 1970s and 1980s have seen a reversal of this progress. Table 6.1 (taken from the 1966, 1971 and 1981 censuses) is significant in this respect.

The table shows that for nearly all groups there has been a decline in geographical mobility. This means that more people's lives are revolving around a decreasing number of localities. Most significantly, there has been a decline in the mobility of the highly influential upper-level service class. SEG 4 (professional employees) maintain quite high mobility though theirs too has declined since the seventies. The only group to have seen an increase (in fact a very considerable increase) is SEG 7, personal service workers.

It is also important to recognise that people's mobility is at its highest at a very limited number of points in their lives. As Table 6.2 shows, the upper-level SEGs may be the most mobile, but this mobility is almost entirely restricted to the early stages of careers, especially around their early 20s when, having qualified, they are establishing themselves in

their careers. At this stage some 10 per cent of professional workers are moving compared to 1 per cent of skilled workers. The mobility of those in SEGs 4 and 5 falls in their late 20s and early 30s. It remains comparatively high, however, compared with other groups. This is because they are proceeding up their internal labour markets. After that, however, mobility tails off dramatically. They are very much tending to stay in the same place.

Table 6.1
Mobility of Socioeconomic Groups, 1966-81

SEG(a)	1966(c)	1971(c)	1981(c)
	rate(b)	rate(b)	rate(b)
1	+133	+82	+25
2	+58	+29	+22
3	+114	+66	0
4	+136	+157	+140
5.1)		+98	+82
5.2)	+100	+14	+38
6	+6	+2	0
7	+30	+40	+136
8	-22	-53	-69
9	-48	-49	-63
10	-43	-46	-57
11	-64	-40	-50
12	-8	-33	-38

(a) Socioeconomic Groups

1	Managers/admin - large firms	7	Personal service
2	Managers/admin - small firms	8	Supervisors
3	Professional, self-employed	9	Skilled manual
4	Professional employees	10	Semi skilled manual
5.1	Ancillary workers	11	Unskilled manual
5.2	Non manual supervisors	12	Other self-employed
6	Junior non manual		

(b) Index of each group's mobility given its share of the workforce. Each SEG's share of migration is compared with its percentage of the workforce and the value is expressed as the percentage above (+) or below (-) the extent to which the share of migration is greater or less than the share of the workforce.

(c) The 1966 Census gives figures for 'wholly moving families' classified by

the occupation of the head of house. The 1971 figures are for economically active men, and the 1981 figures for men over 16. Also the 1981 Census gives figures for migration over one year, whilst the 1966 and 1971 Censuses give figures over five years: the problem here being that over five years it is possible that workers may move out of a region and back again and hence their inter-regional mobility will not register. This will tend to deflate the extent of mobility compared with the 1981 Census.

Source: M. Savage 'The Missing Link? The relationship between spatial mobility and social mobility' (University of Sussex, 1987).

Table 6.2

Percentage of Economically Active Men from Each Group Living in a Different Region One Year Earlier

SEG	Age 20-24	25-34	35-44
1	6.0	3.1	1.8
2	4.2	2.6	1.7
3	13.0	2.5	1.3
4	10.4	5.0	2.0
5.1	5.7	3.3	1.6
5.2	2.7	1.6	0.7
6	2.7	2.0	0.9
7	5.0	3.6	1.9
8	1.8	0.8	0.3
9	1.0	0.8	0.4
10	1.3	0.9	0.5
11	1.4	0.7	0.5
12	1.4	2.4	1.0

Source: see Table 6.1

Women's spatial mobility is even less than that of men but, as Table 6.3 shows, the differences are not great. The similarities are, however, somewhat misleading. Women in SEGs 4 and 5 may in their 20s and 30s have jobs with similar descriptions to those of men. But these will tend to be in relatively casualised employment and, while men can expect to proceed upwards from this stage, this may well be the highest stage in an organisation's hierarchy that women achieve. So women's spatial mobility is similar to that of men although, as we have discussed earlier, patriarchy at work and in the home still militates against their getting good jobs.

Table 6.3

Percentage of Economically Active Women from Each Group Living in a Different Region One Year Earlier

SEG	Age 20-24	25-34	35-44
1	6.0	2.2	0.4
2	4.8	2.8	0.6
3	{7.9}	{4.3}	{1.2}
4	10.8	6.2	2.0
5.1	5.3	3.0	2.0
5.2	1.9	1.2	{0.2}
6	2.2	1.5	0.3
7	3.5	1.3	0.2
8	{1.3}	{1.5}	{0.1}
9	1.0	0.8	0.1
10	1.6	0.6	0.5
11	1.6	0.6	0.5
12	3.5	1.8	0.7

(Figures in brackets indicate very small number of cases)

Source: see Table 6.1

What lies behind this decline in geographical mobility, especially that of the service class? A number of the processes we have looked at earlier begin to provide an explanation. One of the most publicised factors is the massive differential in house prices between regions. Those benefiting from house price inflation may not be anxious to move elsewhere. Similarly, managers who want to pursue their careers in the South East may find themselves locked out by high house prices. At the same time, firms are understandably not anxious to provide financial assistance towards moving if the person subsidised may only move shortly afterwards to another company with better prospects.¹⁸

Another factor may well be the increasing dependence of service class members on two-career households in labour markets where the prime growth is in female service sector employment. It is at least possible (though as yet there is little research on this) that men are to some extent foregoing their own career-prospects so that their wives can pursue their careers and in the process, of course, bringing in substantial second incomes.

Other explanations may lie in the changing nature of labour-processes and employment. It could be, for example, that a rise of more flexible, self-managing, workforces reduces the need for upper-level managers to be moved around the country. There is also the obvious fact that the 'service class', including in particular lower-level service class jobs, have been

increasingly concentrated in the South East. This again might militate against the kinds of geographical hyper-mobility of the 1950s and 1960s.

Again in the realm of employment, a significant development over the past 20 years or so has been the growth in the numbers of small firms. Over one third of employment is now in 'small' firms, those with under 200 employees. The significance of this in terms of geographical mobility is that managers' progress is dependent less on being 'company men' (loyal Japanese-style managers slowly ascending pre-destined careers in their multinational conglomerates) and more on working in small firms in broadly the same geographical region as the large firms and dependent on picking up certain types of work in, for example, advertising and software. As we saw in Chapter 3, a tendency amongst many of the larger companies has been to dispense with certain kinds of more specialised 'in house' work and to subcontract such activities out. The reverse side of this coin is the rapid growth of small firms, though these firms remain highly dependent on 'big' capital.

There may well be other reasons; the decline of opportunities in the public sector, for example. Whatever the causes of declining mobility, there are some potentially important implications here in terms of the significance of locality-based politics. Specifically, we are seeing more upper level households who, either by choice or compulsion, are becoming increasingly committed to their localities and regions; perhaps staying in the same company longer, or perhaps increasingly using their communities and homes as a base from which to travel to other organisations as they seek to improve their incomes.

To an increasing extent, then, middle class households are finding themselves in circumstances which are not wholly unlike those of many of the 'lower' social groups with which we are also concerned. Lower income groups have long been relatively static and dependent on a very limited number of localities. Now, however, the history and relative success of a locality or region are becoming a more shared concern for the influential middle classes. Job opportunities and quality of employment in their region along with provision of collective facilities such as schools and healthcare is therefore of growing concern not just to the lower social groups but to other 'service-class' groups with long-term futures in the locality. Again, the spread of political demands stemming from localities is perhaps more considerable from women than from men. Given the combination of paid and unpaid work which women are still obliged to do (and given that men will make most use of mobility *within* their region) the 'success' of the immediate locality in terms of employment, schools and welfare may be of greater significance to women.

It can therefore be argued that contemporary social change is itself leading to the prospect of new and strengthened local and regional political alliances, one involving increasingly shared interests between

classes and between genders in the same locality. These increasingly shared concerns for locality could become the basis for the locally and regionally-organised strategies we have argued for earlier, and an alternative to the increasingly 'top down' national politics.¹⁹

In this concluding chapter I have briefly spelt out some implications stemming from earlier parts of this book. I have also been bearing in mind the kinds of alliances and coalitions the Left now has to consider making. There have been two main points. First is the insistence on a series of specifically *local* strategies. These would reflect the increasingly diverse array of localities which constitute 'Britain', but they also reflect an alternative to current attempts to centralise government. Again, 'maximum self-management' is a priority but, as I hope to have made clear, a strategy of insular communes is a hopeless form of idealism. National governments and even multinational companies will also have to be used as means towards self-management.

The second point concerns new coalitions. My emphasis on recruiting some social groups (such as women and blue-collar elites) will be unexceptional to many people. The emphasis on alliances with sections of the politically unstable middle-class and professional people may, however, find less acceptance. They will forcefully argue that the objective has to be the abolition of the divisions between managerial employees on the one hand and de-skilled blue and white collar workers on the other. This may be a long-term objective, but for the foreseeable future the service class is the dynamic, growing and highly influential group in contemporary Britain. Managers grew in number by some 24 per cent between 1971 and 1981. Similarly, the number of professionals and intermediate white-collar workers rose by some 26 per cent. By contrast, the skilled blue-collar workers and unskilled workers fell by 11 and 15 per cent respectively. Sections of the dominant and emergent groups need recruiting, even if there remains the not inconsiderable problem of recruiting them to strategies intended to benefit subordinate groups.

If the British Left is to achieve power it will need to progress beyond making rainbow coalitions between minorities. It will also need to start recruiting some of the core groups (many of whom are staying in the South East where the Labour Party has been virtually shut out) to its causes. At the same time, the middle classes themselves might do well to consider these forms of coalition. Their decreasing geographical mobility combined with the potential for capital to move on a global scale means that they too are increasingly in the business of attracting public and private investment to their regions, including the currently booming South East.

Perhaps even more importantly, the social and economic instabilities now emerging from the unleashing of market forces and the increasingly

uneven development of British society mean that, in the perhaps not-so-short run, the middle classes would be well advised to engage in strategies aimed at restoring self-management to those who are losing control over their own lives. Ex Prime Minister Edward Heath refers below to a 'conflagration' emerging from increasing social and spatial divides. He may be right, but the problem is that he is a 'One Nation' politician. As we have argued, one nationism cannot solve the social contradictions involved. A strategy of maximum self-management could begin to do so.

The North is getting larger as massive unemployment has crept southward through the Midlands and eastward from Wales to engulf much of England. And the South is little more than a small patch in London, the South East and South of England ...

History has so often shown us that unfettered market forces lead to the rich and the strong growing richer and stronger and the poor and the weak, poorer and weaker, until some conflagration in society acted to restore the balance.²⁰

Notes

1. This does not of course adequately summarise New Right ideals. Useful introductory surveys are E. Butler, *Hayek* (London: Temple Smith, 1983) and D. Green, *The New Right* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf, 1987). Perhaps the two most influential texts are F. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (University of Chicago, 1944) and M. Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (University of Chicago, 1962).
2. R. Williams, *Towards 2000* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983) p. 197.
3. This would be the logical form of intervention under the 'dual state' thesis in which it is argued that questions of class and production tend to be managed (in a corporatist manner) at central government level while questions of consumption (civil society in our terms) tend to be managed at local level under more conventional competitive politics. For full details of this argument see, for example, A. Cawson, P. Saunders, 'Corporatism, Competitive Politics and Class Struggle' in R. King (ed.) *Capital and Politics* (London: Routledge, 1983). It is in fact arguable whether this is an inevitable or universal tendency in modern capitalist societies. S. Lash and J. Urry in *The End of Organised Capitalism*, (Oxford: Polity, 1987) argue that the days of corporatism are in fact numbered.
4. On the Greater London Council's plans see: GLC *London Industrial Strategy* (London, 1985), GLC, *The London Labour Plan* (London, 1986), GLC, *The London Financial Strategy* (London, 1986). Robin Murray usefully draws some wider lessons from his experience in the GLC's Greater London Enterprise Board in 'Ownership, Control and the Market', *New Left Review*, no.164 (1987) pp.87-112.

5. On contract compliance see, for example, D. Gilhespy *et al.*, *Socialist Enterprise* (Nottingham: New Socialist/Spokesman, 1986) p.47.
6. See interview with K. Livingstone in M. Boddy, C. Fudge (eds) *Local Socialism?* (London: Macmillan, 1984).
7. M. Bulmer *Neighbours: the Work of Philip Abrams* (Cambridge University Press, 1986) p. 95.
8. On the Lucas Aerospace experience and subsequent developments, see H. Wainwright, D. Elliott, *The Lucas Plan* (London: Allison & Busby, 1982) and M. Cooley *Architect or Bee?* (London: Hogarth Press, 1987).
9. A possible model here is the kind of deal negotiated between the Swedish government and the housebuilders. Again, substantial low interest housing loans are made available for new housing, but these are only given on the basis of contracts covering costs, standards and selling prices. From our viewpoint the critical factor lying behind these deals is that they were forced on Swedish government by a highly organised union movement combining with tenants unions with strong national (as well as local) support. For further details see P. Dickens *et al.*, *Housing, States and Localities* (London: Methuen, 1985).
10. The connections between house prices and local economies and whether the biggest differences in house price inflation are at the regional or the urban level are matters of some debate. See D. Thorns, 'Industrial restructuring and change in the labour and property markets in Britain', *Environment and Planning A*, no. 14, (1982), pp. 745-763 and C. Hamnett 'The postwar restructuring of the British housing and labour market: a critical comment on Thorns' *Environment and Planning A*, no. 16, (1984), pp. 147-162. Thorns argues that the biggest divisions are now between the owner-occupiers whose jobs are in the old and declining industrial regions and those living in the relatively affluent South. Hamnett argues, however, that the regional scale is not the best one for picking up the most important inequalities in housing gains or the real compounding of employment gains with housing gains. This is because *over time*, he argues, regional differences in house price inflation are, despite cyclical variations, in fact narrowing and are not therefore compounding the inequalities stemming from those of paid work. So for Hamnett the main spatial divisions in terms of housing are between the inner and outer areas of cities. Developments since these two authors were writing suggest that the 'North-South' divide in house prices may now be getting progressively worse. This is because the industrialisation of the South East has been proceeding apace.
11. On Sheffield's strategies and their shift towards using the public sector as a way of restructuring the local economy, see M. Goodwin, S. Duncan, 'The Local State and Economic Policy: Political Mobilisation or Economic Regeneration?' in *Capital and Class* 27, Winter 1986. See also Gilhespy *et al.*, *Socialist Enterprise*, pp. 64-65. One strategy which the

GLC considered was using the pension funds of the Council's workers for alternative forms of investment. This did not, however, meet with widespread approval from the workers themselves.

12. On the economic and spatial significance of defence spending see A. Sayer, K. Morgan, 'The Electronics Industry and Regional Development in Britain' in A. Amin, J. Goddard (eds), *Technological Change, Industrial Restructuring and Regional Development* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1986) pp. 166-167. Also extremely useful is a special issue of *Built Environment* devoted to the spatial impacts of defence policy. vol.11, no.3 (1985)

13. 'All the trends point to a Tory future', *Sunday Times*, 14 June 1987.

14. It is instructive to note here the recent comments of Tony Dykes, a leader of Camden Council. In a local Labour Party newspaper he writes: 'since 1982 our staffing has grown by 2,000 people (all but 500 are white-collar workers), and we have regraded thousands of staff upwards since 1985. Yet no member of the Labour Group maintains that services are 2,000 staff better or x per cent growth better' (quoted by C. Wolmar in 'The fresh face of the capital's politics', *New Statesman*, 18 September 1987.

15. I. Crewe, 'A new class of politics', *Guardian*, 15 June 1987.

16. J. Goldthorpe *et al.*, *Social Mobility and Class Structure in Modern Britain* (Oxford University Press, 1987, 2nd edn).

17. G. Payne, *Mobility and Change in Modern Society* (London, Macmillan, 1987).

18. Recent interviews of employers in the Slough area by Mike Savage and myself confirm that most companies are extremely loath to cover the cost of house price differences.

19. As regards regionally-organised initiatives developing some of the thinking behind the GLC's strategies, an important recent development is the SEEDS (South East Economic Development Strategy) consortium of local authorities. They are currently preparing strategies for a wide range of industrial sectors and labour markets, the aim being to tackle unemployment, low pay and deteriorating services in this 'affluent' region. See *South South Divide*, SEEDS, Danehill House, Danestrete, Stevenage, Herts.

20. E. Heath 'North South: the Other Common Crisis', speech to the Sunderland Conservative Association, 14 January 1985. Quoted in K. Morgan, 'The Spectre of "Two Nations" in Contemporary Britain', *Catalyst* vol. 2, no.2 (Summer 1986).

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